STORY BY DE VERE STACPOOLE

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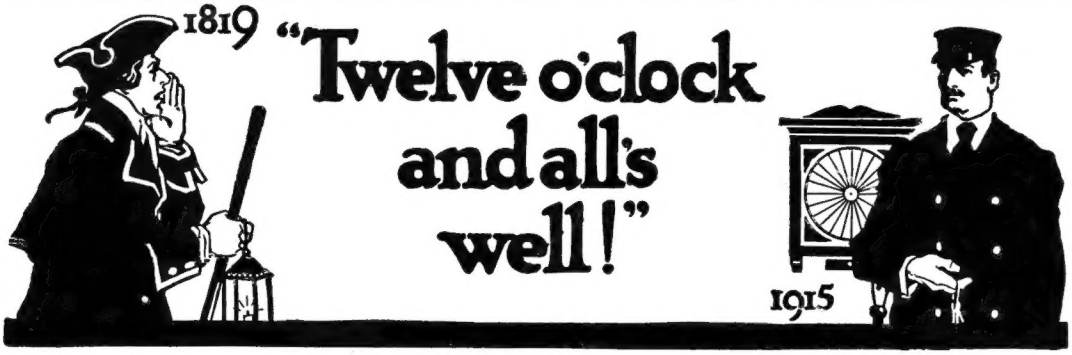

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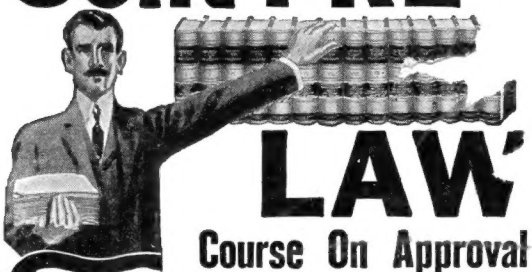

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VOLUME XXXVIII NUMBER 5

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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VOL. XXXVIII. NOVEMBER 20, 1915. No. 5.

Behind the Screen

By Foxhall Williams

Author of "The Varsity Letter," "It Can Be Done," Etc.

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CHAPTER I.

THE FAILURE.

LANSING got out into the avenue just as the newsboys began calling his own name. One of the boys pushed paper, damp and sticky still with the thick ink that went into its glaring headlines, up at him, and he bought it instinctively. Other people, all around him, were buying papers, too; he caught himself, in a moment, turning, with them, to look at the big bulk of the great store he had just left. He felt, somehow, that same half-detached, half-personal interest in the passing of an institution that moved the curious glances of these passers-by.

And then a futile wave of anger overcame him, shaking him, leaving him white and sick. He hurried on, lest some of these people who were looking up from their papers at the big building should recognize him, and point him out, one to the other, scornfully. He could hear, voiced by the demon of self-consciousness that was taking possession of him, even what they would say:

"There—see him? That's young Lansing!" That was what he imagined them saying. "Old man Lansing's son, you know! Say—if I'd had the chance his old man gave him! And he's let the whole thing go to pot! Receivers for Lansing's! What do you know about that?"

That slang phrase that came so pat to his mind summed the whole business up so brutally, so aptly. What did he know about it? Why, nothing at all! That

was just the trouble. The big store, and his interest in it, had just been an institution to him, as it had been to the whole city. He hadn't had anything to do with its success; that had been made, laboriously, before he was born, or while he was growing up, a rich man's son. He hadn't had anything to do with its failure, either. That it was, really, that rankled. That was the thing that filled him with the greatest bitterness.

And it was a bitterness fairly easy to understand, too, when you had the facts, as he had them. It wasn't he, Robert Lansing, who had failed. Failure, in itself, if a man has the right sort of stuff in him, can be as stimulating, as tonic, as valuable as success. But not the sort of failure that had come to Lansing's—and to Robert Lansing. To him, this failure brought the same sensation a man must feel when a bridge collapses under him—with the difference that Lansing knew he should have looked to his own supports. He couldn't get away from that. He had shirked, evaded, deliberately, the responsibilities that had come to him. If he had not shirked, if he had played an active part in Lansing's, the failure would probably have been just as inevitable, he knew. He couldn't console himself with the thought that others had shirked, too; that they had made mistakes. Perhaps they had, but it wasn't for him to justify himself in any such fashion as that.

He had known what was coming for days, of course. With the approach of the crisis that had finally resulted in the bankruptcy of the big store, the active heads of the business had taken him into their confidence. They had had to, for one thing; they needed the money that he had still been able to help them to raise. When it was too late, he had flung himself, rather savagely, into the task of getting a full understanding of what was and had been going on. His head swam with the explanations that had been offered. He knew all about the uptown movement of the retail trade; the tremendous increase in expenses, due to higher rents, to this cause and that.

But he knew other things, too. He knew that he had been willing, indeed, eager, to fall in with the suggestions that had been made to him after his father's death. He had been delighted to incorporate Lansing's, to become a dummy, despite his stock interest in the company, to let a corporation try to step into his father's shoes. He had justified himself by the knowledge that he couldn't fill them himself, and he had no reason now to think that he had been wrong as to that. But—he knew that he ought to have tried.

His father, building up Lansing's from a mite of a retail business to the great estate of its palmy days, had faced worse crises than this one that had ended in the bankruptcy court. He hadn't had anything to start with; much less the great business that had come to his son. His name was still one of the great ones of American mercantile history. He had been one of those pioneers, one of those captains of industry about whom that history was written, who had helped to prove that America was the land of opportunity. He had taken his place in the company of men like Carnegie and Rockefeller, Mackay, Armour, and scores of others like them, who, in greater or lesser degree, had taken toll of the country's needs. It was of such men as Robert Lansing's father that Kipling wrote:

He turns a keen untroubled face
Home, to the instant need of things.
He greets th' embarrassed Gods, nor fears
To shake the iron hand of fate
Or match with Destiny for beers.

But—no poet was ever going to be inspired to write thus of the man Robert Lansing had been, and he knew it. It had taken this catastrophe to drive the truth home, though he had been

sensing it vaguely for a long time, with a growing restlessness and dissatisfaction with the manner of his life. Now this half-formulated complaint he had been making against himself was brought suddenly, by the force of outward circumstances, into a sharp, clear focus. He could express his feeling now, if he couldn't see a remedy, nor, even, exactly what had been responsible. And he guessed that he couldn't have gone on much longer in the old way, even if Lansing's had not gone under.

He quickened his step, to keep pace, in some measure, with the turmoil in his brain. There was no special need for haste. The failure of Lansing's, of course, was going to represent the dropping of a pretty big pebble into the placid pool of his life, and the ripples were going to have their effect. But not just yet. This was none of your melodramatic failures, that transform a man from millions and their surroundings in the first act to a Bowery lodging house in the second. He would have some money left; quite a good deal, indeed, according to ordinary standards. And he hadn't come yet to the point of planning changes in the routine of his life. That is one of the last things people do, anyway, after such an experience.

And so Lansing's mind wandered off at a tangent, for a moment, from the big fact of the failure, and he thought of his engagements for the next few days. Some of them he would probably have to break, he thought, and he frowned as he tried to plan out his time. Then the futility of this overcame him, and he laughed in the face of an imposing lady shopper who was bearing down upon him. He heard her muttering as he passed; she thought, perhaps, that he was trying to flirt with her.

He was still in Sixth Avenue, and he glanced up at the street signs, to see if he reached the point at which he wanted to turn east to reach his rooms. He hadn't, and kept on, to be caught in a sudden outpouring from the doors of a five-cent theater, colorful, in its garish way, with the bright posters that bore witness to the delights to be flashed on the screen within. He caught himself wondering how, in such a neighborhood, such a place could attract so many people of leisure, and, because he couldn't move quickly, he took note of the people who were coming out.

It was nearly five o'clock, and that added to his wonder, since working hours weren't over. He saw women, women of all sorts. Women with their arms full of bundles, in their eyes a remote, happy look, a little fixed—joint product of the romance of the films and the eye strain of steady watching. Well-dressed woman and slatternly, slovenly women, many of them pulling excited children along. But they were shoppers, in the main, and they were hurrying now, with their bundles, toward elevated and tubes, to rush home and fulfill their task of cooking dinner for the breadwinners. But though Lansing saw these things, they meant nothing to him yet. He saw them without understanding, obsessed only with the idea of getting through the press of people that had suddenly barred his swift progress.

That was soon done. The women scattered to their cars, and he forgot his glimpse of something that was new enough, full enough of meaning, to interest him, had he been able to read that meaning, to translate it into terms of opportunity. He went on for two more blocks, turned east, and in five minutes more reached his rooms. From the depths of his easiest chair a cheerful voice greeted him.

"Hello, Bob—lucky you came!" it said. "I couldn't have waited much longer, you know. Had to send your man out for more cigarettes as it was."

"What's up, Sandy?" asked Lansing

resignedly. In his mood, Alexander Brangwyn, who couldn't begin to live up to that sonorous name, was not welcome. But the effort that would be required to make Sandy understand that, without a resort to downright brutality, was beyond him. It was easier to yield.

"Job for you," said Sandy brightly. "Crowd getting up a show for some bloomin' charity. Theatricals, you know—play by some blighter called Pinero, or some such name. Got a fellow to show 'em how. An' he's simply im-poss-ible! Told Mrs. Tommy French she didn't know how to behave in a drawin'-room! Quite right, of course—she doesn't! But she wouldn't stand it—from him. He chucked it—an' they were in a fine hole till I thought of you! So I promised to get you to—stage it, they call it, don't they? They'll take things from you they wouldn't hear of from some beastly professional. What?"

"Can't do it," said Lansing shortly. "I'm sorry, Sandy—but it's out of the question."

"Eh?" said Sandy, staring. "But, I say, old chap—I promised, you know!"

"Look at that!" said Lansing. He tossed over the paper he had carried home.

"Evening paper? What?" said Sandy, with the air of one announcing an important discovery. "Never read 'em! What's the idea, Bob?"

Lansing controlled himself, and explained.

"Too beastly bad, old chap!" said Sandy, after taking it in. "But it just shows they have the right idea in England, you know. Over there this couldn't have happened. Why? Don't you see, you wouldn't have been in trade! It isn't done! Here—the very best people do it—and you see what happens!"

He pondered over the disaster while Lansing became his debtor to the important extent of one sense of humor, hitherto badly frayed and unaccountably missing.

"I tell you what!" he said, brightening again. "I'll lend you some money! Then you can show them how to act their silly play."

But Lansing shook his head.

"No, thanks," he said. "It isn't as bad as that. Only, I've got to quit playing for a while, Sandy, and get my bearings. And I'm going to cut loose entirely—have a new deal."

There was a finality in his tone that silenced even Sandy. No one, and least of all Sandy himself, would have guessed that this decision was less than a minute old.

"I've got to do that!" Lansing broke out suddenly. "Sandy—can't you see what an awful ass I've been? What the devil do I amount to? I can draw well enough to have women ask me to do place cards for their dinners—but I couldn't get a job doing picture postals for money! I could help out your charity theatricals—but a manager would kick me out of his theater after I'd tried to stage one act of a Broadway show! I can half do a dozen other things—and what do they come to?"

"You come along with me," said Sandy firmly. He got up and took Lansing's arm. "I know what's the matter with you, old chap—liver! I'm going to order your dinner for you tonight—and I'll mix the cocktails myself!"

Once more, it was easier to yield than to resist. And Lansing liked the fat little man; he didn't want to hurt his feelings. Then, he had to eat dinner—why not with Sandy?

Sandy, turned autocrat, chose a restaurant, not a club, and a restaurant comparatively strange to Lansing, a place that was full of men, and reeked, even so, of Broadway. But it boasted, as Sandy explained, a cook who was master of just the dishes Lansing

needed, and a bar that was stocked with mysterious liquors vital to the cocktail that was part of the prescription. Lansing obeyed without questioning; the cocktail, as a matter of fact, restored some of his self-respect. He began to feel a little sorry for himself.

There were men all around whom Lansing knew. Some only nodded; several came over to his table, and, haltingly, spoke, with sympathy and regret, of the failure of Lansing's. But the one of all those whom Lansing knew best said nothing at all. This was Hazen, a lawyer, and a man his senior by twenty years. He joined them for his coffee, and talked of trifling things until Sandy brought up the failure. Lansing rather hung on his answer; after the sympathy of the others he had been disposed to resent Hazen's silence.

"I don't know," said Hazen reluctantly. "You can work out a reorganization, can't you, Lansing?"

"It's too late for that!" said Lansing, with a renewed touch of bitterness. "The competition's too fierce. If you're once down you'd better stay, nowadays! My father——"

He stopped, gloomily thoughtful.

"Well?" said Hazen quietly. "I knew your father. He weathered some pretty severe storms."

"Things were different then!" retorted Lansing. "Those were the days of opportunity. There were chances, then. Things waiting to be done. Now—everything's been done, or is being done. It's a case of working away in the rut you get into——"

"So?" Hazen had snatched the chance for a long, keen look at Lansing. "You think the great days of opportunity are over here?"

"Aren't they?" asked Lansing. "Everything's standardized! The country's settled. It's grown up. There's no West any more—just for one thing. Do you suppose a man could do now what Rockefeller did with oil—or Carnegie and that Pittsburgh crowd with steel?"

"Do you suppose any one—except themselves, perhaps—thought they could do what they did, when they were getting started?" Hazen answered question with question.

Lansing didn't answer. And Hazen, after a moment's pause, went on.

"There's a good deal left to do," he said cheerfully. "And, as to the store, there'll be a reorganization, of course, whether you're in it or not. Feeling as you do, you'd better stay out of it, I should think. But you're going to do something, I take it?"

"Oh, yes! I'll wait till I see what there is left. If they reorganize, I suppose I'll get some cash."

"Very likely," said Hazen. "And you had a good deal of stuff outside of the store?"

"I had—yes. I've thrown most of it to the wolves, though, lately. You know, it looked as if some cash would save the store. So I put up about every decent security I had. In fact, I've only got one small block of stock left. I wouldn't have thought of that if I hadn't found a dividend check to-night before Sandy dragged me here! It's some Western Film the governor must have bought to oblige a friend. I supposed it wasn't any good when I was checking up the stuff, and left it out."

"Western Film?" said Hazen curiously. "I didn't know any was loose. How much?"

"Only a few shares—I've forgotten just how many. It's no good, is it?"

"Hard to tell," said Hazen. "Depends on a lot of things."

"Oh, I say!" protested Brangwyn. "Can't we talk about somethin' interestin'? I brought old Bob here to forget business! Who's that big bounder over there at the round table—the chap with the bald head?"

"That?" Hazen looked across the

room. A good many eyes were centering on that table just then. The man who had attracted Brangwyn's attention was spectacular enough to explain the interest he aroused. A great figure of a man, he seemed to tower, even as he sat at table, leaning far back, his voice raised in a roaring note that extinguished hopelessly any attempt of his companions to speak except at his sufferance. From time to time he brought a huge fist crashing down on the cloth, setting silver and glass to dancing.

"That's Jim Hazzard," said Hazen, with a smile. "You might ask him about your Western Film stock, Bob. He's the big man in that concern. And —well, he might serve as a living answer to some of your other questions, too. About the opportunities one can still find. Five years ago he was running a saloon in Chicago, and just about breaking even. To-day you'll find him rated in Bradstreet at a million and a half."

A man may have a good many more millions than one and a half and still not be worth a second glance. But that isn't so of a man who has *made* that much money in five years. Lansing stared, frankly, openly, with a dawning wonder in his eyes.

"You mean to say he's made that—out of moving pictures?" he asked. "But—look here—that dividend check —it didn't represent more than four per cent, and it's the first that's ever been paid on the stock——"

Hazen shrugged his shoulders.

"You might ask him about that, too," he suggested. "You want to remember he's on the inside. The men on the ground floor don't have to depend on dividends. They've got other ways of getting money, if they control the stock."

"Yes—that's so," said Lansing. He continued to stare at Hazzard, absorbed, fascinated. "And perhaps my father thought of going into that game in earnest—of getting to be an insider? Maybe that was why he had that stock —as an opening wedge?"

"Your father was a pioneer," said Hazen. "He wasn't in the habit of staying on the outside."

"I know," said Lansing. He drew in a deep breath. There came over him, with an astonishing vividness, a memory of that outpouring of women from the five-cent theater in Sixth Avenue that he had seen that afternoon. He had a vision of such theaters in other streets. He remembered the electric signs, the garish stands of colored posters, glimpsed from automobiles in which he had ridden through the swarming streets of the East Side, the residential sections far uptown, with their miles upon miles of apartment houses, standing in serried rows.

"Look here!" he said suddenly. "I was going to try to sell that stock—I thought maybe that dividend would make a market! But if my father thought there was something in the business——"

"I heard it estimated the other day," said Hazen musingly, "that five or six million people go to see moving pictures every day in America, in about seven thousand theaters."

"They're welcome," said Sandy, with a chuckle. "I say—we've got time to take in a show! There's a new one at the Casino."

"No!" said Lansing. "Let's go to the movies! I want to see what there is in this game! Maybe it's going to be mine!"

CHAPTER II.

THE COAST OF ADVENTURE.

Where the guns of the twin forts of Washington and Lee once swept the Hudson, barring the ascent of the river by the British during the Revolution, history has been made again in these

latter days—the history of a new industry. Fort Lee is as great a name in the chronicles of the movies as it was in those of the Continental army. On top of the Palisades wild deeds are done daily. Within easy gunshot of the metropolis of America, that wild land on top of the crags that overlook the Hudson is a treasure house for the men who make moving pictures. A good director will find almost any scene he wants there. He can achieve the local color for Western prairies, for forest romance, for the battlefields of half the world. The most realistic pictures of the Canadian Northwest that were ever made were taken there, and a few feet of film had to be cut out, now and then, when the careless camera man had allowed the great gas tank across the river, on the New York shore, to appear.

The ferry from Manhattan carries a daily army of invasion, bound for the studios. They are a friendly lot, gathering in jolly groups, most of them. But some there are, every day, whose eyes are full of care. These are the extra people, doomed as yet to make their daily pilgrimage in search of work, as likely to go on a vain errand to the Universal studio at Coytesville and find that only a society drama, with no extras, is being made, as to the Eclair plant at Fort Lee, where a frantic director may be tearing his hair because he has suddenly decided he needs a hundred extra people, and only a dozen have appeared. It is as difficult as it ever was to be in two places a mile apart at one and the same moment, and it is seldom, indeed, that a movie director will condescend to say, a day ahead, what his future needs will be.

And so there is something wistful, pathetic, often, about these stragglers and camp followers of the army, just as there is something pleasing about the great mass of privates in the ranks, those who are regularly employed in small parts. But then there are the aristocrats, too. You can see those lolling in their automobiles, nowadays, for the day of great salaries has come to the movies, looking out with condescension on the humble ones who stand and will rush for the trolleys at the end of the trip. Here you may enjoy an intimate view of some favorite of the films, smoking a cigarette or dabbling at her face with a powder puff, as the case may be.

But the day of automobile salaries was only just beginning to dawn when Lansing made his first trip on the eight-o'clock boat to begin his practical study of the movies. The movies were attracting audiences by virtue of their novelty. The mere fact that the pictures moved seemed to be almost enough. The era of tremendous competition, with the exploitation of personalities, was coming, had begun, indeed. But it hadn't arrived. Machinery was still in the ascendant, since it had not yet reached the perfection of standardization. As soon as it did the supremacy of the men and women who could use that machinery best would be assured; actors and actresses, producers, would stand out as individuals, and their names would mean something to those who maintained the industry by their tributes of nickels and dimes.

It was like that, of course, with the automobile. In the early days, when Daimler and Benz and Haynes and Selden were laying the foundations, the great thing was that a wagon could be made to move without being drawn by horses. Just as with the pictures, the fundamental fact of motion was the all-sufficient, essential thing. With something approximating perfection came the great days of the individual, the era of racing. Then men who couldn't have told you whether Daimler was a new sort of apple or an operatic composer knew all about the achievements of Lancia and Barney Oldfield

and had the history of the Vanderbilt Cup and the French Grand Prix at the end of their tongues.

Lansing had let no grass grow under his feet after that night when he had seen Jim Hazzard. He had been able to see through the grossness, the coarse shell of the man, to the smooth-working brain behind the cold blue eyes. He had sensed, as he studied Hazzard, his oneness with his father, with those other seizers of opportunity. But he might have done that and been no nearer to seeing that the same opportunity that Hazzard had seized upon lay within his grasp, too. He had gone farther. The very fact that the thing surprised him held a suggestion that was full of meaning. That and his instant reversion to the moment when he had been caught in the crowd of the women from the nickelodeon in Sixth Avenue.

Why hadn't he known about the movies? Why hadn't he, himself, fallen under a spell that held so many millions of people every day? And how about Hazen and Brangwyn? They didn't go to the movies, nor his other friends. Yet he and his friends weren't exceptional people. They shared all sorts of entertainments with these people who made up the audiences of the nickel theaters. The only difference was that he and Brangwyn sat in orchestra seats and paid two dollars, while these others looked down from the upper balconies. A show, to be really successful, had to appeal to orchestra and galleries alike. He caught the analogy of that, and thought about it. And, because, to think intelligently, he had to have a lot of facts, he set to work to take the moving-picture industry apart and see what made its wheels go round.

He had gone at his task in a cold, driving way that would have surprised Sandy Brangwyn and others of his older friends vastly. It surprised him, for that matter. But in the turmoil, the sickening work of watching the liquidation and winding up of Lansing's, it meant a good deal to have something that kept him busy, something that represented, in a way, a bridge between the dead, useless past and the future in which he hoped really to live.

There had been much for him to learn. He rediscovered things about himself, half forgotten—his need for exact knowledge. He inherited that from his father, who had applied a scientific mind to trade. In six weeks of digging he learned more things about the making of moving pictures than Jim Hazzard, with his million and a half that was still growing, would ever know. He had the history of the film, of the camera, with the vital sprocket, at his command. He revived an old interest in photography and made a study of the science of it that would have been amusing if it hadn't been so passionately earnest.

And, day after day, night after night, whenever he had a spare hour, he was in moving-picture theaters. He watched the films at first, but soon he was more interested in the people who sat around him. He watched three or four successive runs of a picture, to study the impression it made upon wholly different types in the audiences. He analyzed the appeal of every sort of picture, filled endless sheets of paper with notes, and then tore them up, filing away his conclusions mentally.

He laughed at himself, sometimes. Jim Hazzard hadn't done this sort of thing, nor, so far as he knew, had any of the other big men of the industry. Perhaps they hadn't felt the need. But he did. He had a curiously logical mind, that demanded exactitude. All the time he was making plans vaguely. And all the time he knew that they would remain in that vague state until he had his foundation of exact knowl-

edge properly built. Again, his heritage from his father was striking out. One who watched him, and had known the elder Lansing, would have understood, remembering how Robert Lansing's father had understood every detail of his business, so that he could show a boy the best way to wrap a spool of thread, the clerk in the shipping room the easiest, quickest way to box a dinner set, a salesgirl exactly the way to send a customer away with the feeling of satisfaction in the service of the store that would make her return.

Financially, Robert Lansing suffered less than he might have done from the failure of the great store. There had been a reorganization, abruptly halting the receivership and the forced sales. Other interests had stepped in, seizing avidly the chance of a sharp bargain. There had been a compounding with creditors, an assumption, by the new owners, of certain contracts and great debts. Lansing hadn't been vitally interested. He had turned his own interests over to Hazen, and had accepted, with astonished gratitude, the lawyer's report of what had been saved from the wreck. There was a good deal more money left than he had expected —nearly eighty thousand dollars. Conservatively invested, that would represent a comfortable income, enough to let him go on very much as before, with certain easily effected economies. But he was in no mood for conservative investments, and he was too busy to worry about the things he had stopped doing, important as they had seemed before. He abandoned luxurious rooms and service without a qualm, and buried himself in a two-room apartment far uptown, where he cooked his own breakfast and had an arrangement with the janitor's wife to make his bed and sweep his rooms for a weekly pittance. The bulk of his money he banked, leaving it instantly available for the grasping of the opportunity he had determined to make for himself out of this new-born moving-picture industry.

More and more, as he had studied the business, Lansing had been absorbed and obsessed by the great, dominating figure of Jim Hazzard. Not that Hazzard was, at this time, the greatest figure in the industry. Half a dozen men were richer, on the surface, at least, bigger. But he felt that Hazzard was still growing, moving, reaching out for greater things than any of them had yet touched. That was why, with his theoretical knowledge fairly assembled, Lansing would have selected one of Hazzard's studios as his destination on the morning of his first trip across the Fort Lee ferry, even had he not held his few shares of Hazzard's stock. He wanted to get in touch with the vital force that Hazzard was contributing to the actual making of the pictures. And so he was on his way, without introduction, as casually, on the surface, as any of the other camp followers, to look for work as an extra, at the two or three dollars a day that such work commanded.

Lansing had covered a good deal of ground since the day he had been caught in the crowd in Sixth Avenue without any understanding of its significance. On the ferryboat, he was vastly interested in the people he saw. He tried to guess what sort of parts these men and women played, or hoped to play. He watched them as they spoke to one another, picked out, first one, then another, and both watched and listened shamelessly to see how facial expression interpreted and colored what they were saying.

And then, by pure chance, his eyes fell on a slim, pale girl who stood apart from the others. Like him, she was watching them, with an intent, tremendous interest she made no effort to conceal. She leaned forward, and her eyes wandered back and forth from one group to another. Her eyes were deep

set, of a dark gray that gave them the most curious emphasis. Strictly speaking, she was not beautiful. Lansing, with his new trick of observation, understood that—and studied her, almost with irritation, to find out what it was that made it so impossible to overlook her, even in this crowd.

For just a moment he thought it was her pallor and her eyes. Then, again, he decided that he had been wrong, that, after all, she was beautiful. But her features, taken one by one, disproved that. They weren't in accord, somehow, with the slim grace of her body, and his eyes wandered, inconsequently, to her hands and feet—which were. Then he caught the secret. There were moments, when something interested her, when her beauty was in the ascendant. But that was due to the astonishing mobility of her face, its extraordinary expressiveness. For he could see, when her face was in repose, the faint thickening of every line. Her nostrils were just a hint too broad, and her nose itself, straight enough, had not the thin, delicate line that beauty demands. So with her lips. Parted, one would not notice that thickening—not so pronounced as to suggest coarseness. But when her mouth was still it was there. And yet that clumsiness of modeling that robbed her of the beauty she had so nearly achieved was what gave her the expressiveness, the quick reflection of each trifling change of mood or impression that was her great attraction.

Lansing fell into a brown study as he stared at her, so that he saw, after a moment, not the girl herself, but the mental image of her that he had recorded. And then, with a start, he came to himself, and found that her eyes were fixed on him, that she was appraising his stare. They fell away at once, but not before he had seen and understood the thought that was back of her eyes. She was wondering at him and his curious stare, trying to analyze it, to determine whether she need fear him, or resent his scrutiny. At that he smiled, very faintly, to himself, but he was filled, too, with a sense of pity that was not quite dispelled when the boat bumped against the piles of the slip, and he turned eagerly shoreward, with the feeling that he had come to a landing on the coast of adventure.

CHAPTER III.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

The coast of adventure it was, perhaps. But it was a barren, rock-bound sort of coast, as forbidding, one might guess, as that upon which the Pilgrims landed in New England. It may have been that thought that made Lansing stick to his quest, too, for more than once, after his landing, sick and disgusted, he was on the point of giving up and looking elsewhere for his opportunity.

In the rush from the ferryhouse to the waiting trolley cars, Lansing brushed against the girl, and shied off at once. Yet they met, two minutes later, in the middle of a car they had boarded at opposite ends, and he caught the girl biting her lips as she repressed a faint smile. She had decided by this time, evidently, that his scrutiny called neither for fear nor for resentment.

The car took them all, regulars and extra people alike, up the Palisades, in a winding course made necessary by the steep ascent. At a junction, on the level plain above, the delegations for the different studios began to scatter, but Lansing and the girl were bound for the same destination. When they reached the end of the run of the second car they alone survived of the unattached group. The others had tried their luck at different studios. Up in the front of the car, a little group of half a dozen were headed for the Western studio, too, it seemed; when the car

stopped, the girl let them lead the way up the hill, and Lansing, hoping she knew the ropes, brought up the rear of the procession. Here, at the very start, with all his theoretical knowledge of the films, he was in practical difficulties. He realized suddenly that he didn't know how to ask for work, didn't have an idea of the routine.

The girl did, however, and showed it by the assurance of her movements and her manner. Lansing's first glimpse of the studio showed him a high, long fence, behind which he saw canvas backs of "sets"—scenery placed outdoors. It was like coming to the stage of a theater from the wings. Then came an overgrown conservatory, all of glass, and beyond that a structure that looked like a barn or a converted livery stable. Into this disappeared the actors who led the van, and Lansing hastened his steps a little as he saw the girl follow them. By the time he got inside the girl alone was left. She sat down quietly just outside a gate, and, after he had read a forbidding sign, directed especially to "extras," Lansing followed suit.

But he did it with a chill that affected his enthusiasm for the whole adventure most adversely. Was this any way to do business? There was not even an office boy to take note of their presence! Just a sign that forbade all who were not cast to pass the gate. From within there came sounds of life. Talk, laughter, occasionally loud-voiced inquiries for this person or that, the sound of furniture being dragged about.

Lansing wasn't used to waiting. It made him restless, and he got up, after a few minutes, and began to pace the little waiting hall. A dozen people would have crowded it; that was a grievance, too, though there was room enough, certainly, for the girl and himself. She watched him for a minute with amused eyes. Then——

"This your first time?" she asked.

He swung around, and his hat came off. His first impression was one of annoyance. No girl as pretty as this one should have such a voice! It was unmusical, rough, untrained. But it was a kindly question, of course. And her voice explained why she had recourse to the movies, when the stage seemed to be her vocation.

"Yes," he answered. "Is this the usual thing? Does one always have to sit down and wait like this?"

"It all depends," she told him. "I've waited here for three hours, sometimes. But then, again, you're likely to be called in right away. You never can tell."

"That's a fine way to do business!" said Lansing, in great disgust. "I shouldn't think they'd get many people to come here for work, at that rate!"

"Oh, well!" She shrugged her shoulders slightly. He noticed that it was a trick of hers to make a gesture serve the ends of speech whenever she could. "Hello—here's some one now—Haines, I think."

A young man, coatless, his sleeves rolled up, perspiring, exuding energy as well as moisture, came down the hall that had been made by boarding off partitions. His gait was half a walk, half a run.

"Extras!" he bawled, as he approached. "Who's here? Oh——" And he swore.

He came to a halt and surveyed them disgustedly.

"Beat it inside, Brewster!" he said to the girl. "Street stuff—get a wop costume."

She departed, with a faint smile thrown at Lansing as she went. Haines, the director, glared at Lansing.

"Greenhorn?" he snapped. "Any experience?"

"Yes! No!" said Lansing, answering both questions, and glared back.

"All right—I'll have to use you to-day, anyhow," said Haines. "Dick!"

A lean youth, with sagging shoulders, emerged from a cubby-hole beyond the gate.

"Dick—phone and see if you can't scare me up a dozen extras from around for that street scene. Then take this guy's name and show him how to get ready. Shoot him along when he's fixed."

He disappeared. Dick crooked a finger, and Lansing, raging inwardly, followed him. He waited while Dick telephoned to three or four studios, in a complaining, singsong voice.

"Come along!" said Dick, then. "Gee—it's always the same way! When we don't need any extras we can't walk without stepping on 'em—when we do, there won't be any!"

"Why not let them know ahead?" suggested Lansing.

"Gee—how's the boss know what he's going to make till he gets ready?" Dick wondered. "Here y'are—pick out one of them wop outfits and get into it, quick! Better darken your eyes a bit, too, and wipe some stuff on your lips. Know how?"

Lansing did know how. His success in amateur theatricals implied that sort of knowledge. He applied pencil and lip stick quickly and skillfully; then donned the costume of an Italian of Mulberry Bend with a careless, but effective, attention to details like tie and sash that won Dick's approval. And then he followed Dick to a place that made him think of an insane asylum he had once visited.

For the first time, he saw a picture in the process of making. Clouds had darkened the sky for a time; an indoor scene was being made. Under a battery of vacuum lights, casting a ghastly, greenish-white glare that annihilated shadows, three or four principals were rehearsing a scene. Haines, a script clutched in his hand, sat astride a chair before the camera, barking out his instructions, that governed every movement, every gesture, every shade of expression of the actors. Two minutes of observation left Lansing with an overwhelming impression—the utter destruction of individuality that was involved in this process. It was Haines who did everything.

The actors didn't know what they were doing. Blindly, dumbly, they obeyed orders. Haines alone knew the meaning of what they did. In his mind alone were all the scattered threads of the story that was being enacted brought together. A cast that had included Bernhardt and Duse, Sothern and Forbes-Robertson, couldn't have interpreted that photo play, since Haines gave his puppets no inkling of the emotions, the desires that belonged to the characters they played.

"You come in, Deane," he would say to the leading woman. "Look at the picture and register grief."

And Mary Deane, a pretty, insignificant blonde, obeyed. But the grief that distorted her features carried no conviction. She registered grief because Haines told her to do so; not because, interpreting the rôle of the heroine, she imagined herself, for a moment, as suffering whatever it was that the scenario called upon that character to endure.

So it went. The girl he knew as "Brewster" came in, transformed, somehow, by her make-up and her costume, and looking, to his eyes, infinitely more like an actress and an artist than any of the much better paid principals. Other extra people came straggling in, too, during the morning. Just before the brief luncheon interval Lansing was called up, and worked before the camera for the first time. His part made no demands on him; he had simply to form one of a crowd that denounced the driver of an automobile who had just run over a child. And yet, in this scene, something happened that made a great impression on him.

While it was being rehearsed, under

the lash of the director's tongue, the gray-eyed girl suddenly detached herself from the crowd of extras, sank down, and, covering her face with her shawl, began to sob convulsively, her shoulders heaving. Haines saw her, leaped forward, then stopped.

"That's good!" he cried sharply. "Repeat that—and take down your shawl, afterward, and register grief. Look as if you were the kid's mother! We needed something like that for this scene!"

"Of course you did!" muttered Lansing to himself.

And afterward he approached the girl.

"How did you happen to break away from what he told us to do?" he asked her curiously.

"Oh, I don't know!" she said. "I —I just sort of felt as if I really was a woman in a crowd like that—and I thought if I was I'd cry!"

"I see," said Lansing thoughtfully.

It seemed to him afterward that that was the one bright spot of his whole day in the studio. It was the one instance of a genuine effort to act. Everything else was mechanical, the result of a narrow, prescribed routine. It was by a slavish adherence to routine that Haines got his effects. Lansing wasn't ready to question this. Haines might be right; probably he was. But, if he was, what hope could lie in the whole business? Marionettes, the Punch and Judy shows he had seen in France and England, offered as great a field as moving pictures of the sort Haines made. And yet—when Haines had the real thing thrown at him by the gray-eyed girl, he had recognized it, seized upon it avidly. Perhaps Haines knew the limitations of his people. Perhaps he had to work as he did with the material he had.

However that might be, Lansing had accomplished one thing, at least. He knew now, or thought he did, why the people who sat in the two-dollar seats of the theaters didn't fill the five and ten-cent moving-picture houses—one of the reasons, at least.

"These people don't see what they've got!" he said to himself, half contemptuously. "They're offering shoddy goods—cheap and nasty. They get the trade that has to have cheap stuff, and can't care how nasty it is as long as it is cheap. But that girl, now—I'm going to keep my eyes on her——"

Out of the very disgust that had repelled him at first he began, now, to get fresh inspiration. If things were wrong, if chances were being overlooked by these people, who, after all, had accomplished a great and conspicuous success, didn't that mean that his opportunity was all the greater? If Jim Hazzard, with such methods underlying his business, had been able to make a fortune in five years, why shouldn't another man, profiting by Hazzard's mistakes, make a greater one?

It wasn't a standardized business he wanted to break into—what he needed was a chance to be a pioneer, as his father had been before him. He began to see the analogy, to understand a little better some of the things Hazen had said. And this was much more nearly a virgin field than the one his father had tilled with such great results. Men had been keeping store for centuries, but it had been left for Lansing's father and his contemporaries to revolutionize all the accepted methods and build up great fortunes by doing so. As for moving pictures, Hazzard had been in that business for five years, and was rated one of the pioneers—while a man who could go back to the dim beginnings, in the late nineties, was already an historic, almost a mythological, figure!

He watched Haines for the rest of the day with an amused sort of tolerance. And he did not neglect the girl with the gray eyes. He wondered how

Haines could fail to see how immeasurably better than his leading woman was this almost nameless extra girl, who, even as a super, sank herself for the moment into the character she was playing. Lansing couldn't do that himself; self-consciousness, or something of the sort, made it impossible for him ever to enter into that state of illusion.

But his experience in amateur theatricals had taught him the value of that power, as well as its rarity. He knew that, in nine cases out of ten, it constituted the one great difference between amateur and professional. But he was glad Haines didn't see the girl's value. She was beginning to figure vaguely in even vaguer plans that were forming in Lansing's mind. When Dick made him write down his name and address, at the end of the day's work, in a big book in the office, he took the chance to make a note of the girl's entry.

Mary Brewster she was called. She lived far uptown in New York. As soon as he was alone he wrote down name and address.

CHAPTER IV.

THE START.

No lad apprenticed in a medieval guild ever learned a trade more thoroughly than Lansing learned the new business of the movies in the weeks, fast growing into months, that followed his first contact with the actual making of a picture on top of the Palisades. Not for many days did he go back to Haines; meanwhile he had worked as an extra under almost every director of the colony that centered in Fort Lee. Then he took a long jump and saw the wholly different methods in use in California, where, instead of making exterior sets for camera work under glass and vacuum lights, the most elaborate interiors were set up outdoors, and every picture was made, from start to finish, in the clear, even sunshine of the coast.

He improved as an actor inevitably; any one would have done that. He won praise from directors, and more than one offer of a real job, with a place on the pay roll. But the glamour of the work, though it threatened to hold him more than once, never quite obscured his realization that behind the studios, behind the autocratic directors, the actors who were beginning to emerge from the anonymity of the earlier films, there were big, dominating figures like that of Jim Hazzard. It was those men who were creating the industry who appealed to him most; he sought eagerly for every crumb of information as to their rise, delighting in the constant proof of the opportunities they had seen and seized.

The new industry, still in the pinafore stage, had its sagas already. It had no written history, but everywhere Lansing found men to tell him the things that the historian of the future will record. He heard of the first timid steps, when two fundamental inventions, that of the celluloid film and of the still rather mysterious camera, with its sprocket mechanism that made the rapid motion of the film possible, had enabled Edison and the Biograph pioneers to make the first crude pictures.

In those early days motion had been enough. Audiences had cheered, in startled wonder, at the sight of a moving train, a crowd walking along a street, a galloping horse. It was with such pictures, he heard, that J. Stuart Blackton and Albert E. Smith, then doing the stock tricks of magicians in vaudeville, had made their start. They made their first pictures themselves, on the roof of an old building in Nassau Street, and got a young real-estate broker, named William T. Rock, to finance their first experiments. He needed no one to tell him that those three were now the owners of the great

Vitagraph Company—one of the undisputed leaders of the industry.

Everywhere the men with the long memories harked back to the epoch-making year of 1903, when E. S. Porter, of the Edison Company, produced the first real motion-picture drama—the famous "Great Train Robbery." In that picture, for the first time, a real story was developed and told on the film, acted out by real actors. And after that—the beginning of the deluge. He heard that in Los Angeles, from an actor who had been in the films since the beginning, and was glad now to get extra work two or three times a week.

"And, my boy—here's a coincidence!" said the actor. He pointed to a lean, sharp-faced man, with piercing eyes, that let no passer-by escape their scrutiny. "Do you see that man? That's Anderson—Broncho Billy!"

Lansing was interested at once. He had heard of the man who had first made the cowboy films popular, with a vogue that carried them clear around the world.

"Yes, sir!" the actor went on. "That's Broncho Billy—G. M. Anderson, the A of Essanay—S an' A—see? Nerve! My boy, if I'd had his nerve I'd be a millionaire to-day! He was in that film I was telling you about—'The Great Train Robbery.' And afterward he acted a lot. He got to know how the pictures ought to be made, you see. So he got a hunch. And he went out to Chicago and dug up a fellow he'd known a long time—G. K. Spoor. Spoor, he was making eyeglasses and things—just in a small way. Nice little business he had—salting away a thousand a year, I'd guess.

"Well, Anderson filled him up full of this moving-picture game, and got him excited. So Spoor put up the money and they started Essanay, with Spoor to run the business and Anderson to see to the pictures, and act in 'em, too, in his cowboy parts. I guess you know the money they're making to-day!

"Nerve! That's the thing that's built this business up, my friend! There's C. J. Hite—Hite, of Thanhouser. Heard of him, haven't you? Well, he was running a lunch room in Chicago. He started one of the first independent exchanges—with his hat for an office, from all I hear. Rented films out to the little theaters, that the big trust exchanges wouldn't do business with at all. Gave up his lunch room—and that let Paul Davis out of his job as a waiter. But Paul didn't bear any hard feelings to Hite—and proved it, a bit later. Paul got a job with some big man in Chicago, and later on, when Hite got a chance to buy old man Thanhouser out, he met this fellow Davis, looking prosperous, and told him of his chance, and the money he needed to snatch it. So Paul got his boss to put up a hundred thousand dollars for Hite to play with! Hite's on his way to his million to-day!"

It seemed to Lansing that there was some such story about every man who had risen to the top. And about these stories there was one striking point of similarity. Every one seemed to hinge on the fact that its hero had looked ahead, had seen the great days that were coming, and had risked everything on his vision. They had all had nerve. Sigmund Lubin, in Philadelphia, giving up his life work in middle age—like Spoor, he had been a maker of optical instruments—had put himself and all his little capital into the new business and reaped a great harvest. Carl Laemmle, abandoning a tailor shop in Milwaukee, had opened a nickel theater in Chicago, and gone on from step to step until he had built up the Universal corporation, controlling half a dozen brands of films and exchanges all over the country, in open rivalry of what all movie men called the trust.

He got the chronicle of Jim Hazzard, too. Hazzard appealed to many as he

did to Lansing, to whom he seemed a true figure of romance, unromantic as was his personal appearance. He heard what Hazen had already told him; that Hazzard, five years or so before, had been the owner of a Chicago saloon. In connection with his saloon, he had had a summer garden. And, to attract patronage to this, he had taken to showing films, getting old, worn prints that he could rent cheaply.

The response of his trade had startled him, and he had seen at once that what he intended as an advertisement was bigger than the thing he wanted to advertise. Unhesitatingly he had sold his business, grinning at the loss he had to bear, and plunged into the business of the pictures. He tried to build up an exchange business; found that the trust made such terms that there was no profit left for him, and began, in a small way, to make films that he could distribute on his own terms. One thing led to another; he found himself, before, perhaps, he quite realized what he was doing, in active opposition to the trust—made up, it may be well to explain, of the companies, now grouped together, that worked under a license from the owners of the basic camera patents.

Lansing, studying the rise of Hazzard, found himself always at a loss to know whether his success was due to genius or a sublime sort of luck; everything Hazzard had done had been so inevitable a result of something that had gone before. The great Western Company itself was simply Hazzard's answer to the decree of the trust that his exchanges must handle only trust films—as the first independent exchanges, in their turn, had been the defiance of the trust's refusal to allow its exchanges to supply film to theaters that did not show trust films exclusively.

So now three great rivals were fighting for control of the industry. Only in the Western group could Lansing see the domination of an individual; the trust and the other great independent group lacked personality, since they had no Hazzard. They had plenty of commanding figures, but Hazzard still remained in a class by himself. That, as a matter of fact, was because he appealed more especially to Lansing's instinct for organization. He wasn't as good a film man as a score of lesser figures. Lansing, indeed, knew more, as a result of his study of the business, than did Hazzard himself of the details that were vital in the actual conduct of affairs.

His California visit put the finishing touches on Lansing's self-education. He went East with the feeling that he knew, now, as much as he needed to enable him to plunge into the business. And yet, as fast trains carried him homeward, he was as far as ever from making up his mind as to how to go in. He wanted to lead, not to follow; above all, he wanted to be independent. And it seemed to him that, despite the youth of the industry, he was too late to achieve either of those desires very fully. What was there to be done that had not been done already? Things might be better; there was an almost unlimited opportunity for improvement. But all a newcomer could do, after all, was to make pictures. And, as to independence—when he had made them they had to be marketed.

They had to reach the public—and the public sat before the screens of innumerable theaters, which got their films from the big exchanges, which were under control of one or the other of the great groups. His thinking was circular; he reminded himself, as he tried to work out his problem on the train, of a dog chasing his own tail. He was pretty low-spirited, indeed. It was one of those periods of discouragement and distrust of self that most men experience. He abused himself.

He remembered his bitter self-condemnation after the failure of Lansing's and the things that he knew had been said about him.

It seemed to him that he, in that first bitter and sharp fit of passionate regret for the time he had wasted, and the friends of his father who had sneered at him, had been wholly right. His sudden interest in moving pictures wasn't a symptom of acute and intelligent ambition, somewhat belated in its manifestation, but only the sort of reflex action that can be produced in any creature, even a mule, by a well directed and unexpected kick. Of course, the Lansing failure had stirred him up. But to what end? He knew all about the moving-picture industry now—or thought he did. And what good did that do him? He saw no way to apply his knowledge. The opportunities that had beckoned so plainly to Laemmle and Hite, Hazzard and Blackton, might still be present. But he couldn't see any of them. And so, for him, they didn't exist.

He was in the grip of that despondent mood when he got to Chicago. His train was late, and he missed his New York connection. That was chance, pure and simple; a whim of fate, or whatever you choose to call it. So was part of what followed.

There was no reason for Lansing to be in a hurry to reach New York, and he decided to spend a day or two in Chicago, where there were friends he had not seen for a long time. He got to his hotel about midnight; the first face he saw in the lobby was that of Hazen, the lawyer, who had been the first to point Jim Hazzard out to him. There was nothing remarkable about this. Hazen's practice took him all over the country. He greeted Lansing with great friendliness, and then he smiled, rather quizzically.

Lansing had changed a good deal since his last meeting with Hazen. The change had begun before he had gone West, manifesting itself in a certain indifference to things that had formerly seemed important. Lansing had been the pride of a fashionable tailor. Now he wore a suit that most obviously hadn't renewed its acquaintance with a pressing iron for many days, and that hadn't profited as a result. His shoes were dusty; his hat, a soft, slouchy panama, would have shocked his ex-valet. He looked bigger, too. He had filled out; his shoulders were broader and straighter. And his face and hands had been burned to a rich golden brown by the California sunshine. Hazen, noting the change, and groping mentally to describe it, got the exact word. Lansing looked more American.

"Thank Heaven!" said Lansing. "Have you got anything to do?"

"I've got to go to bed," said Hazen, with a smile.

"Wrong! You've got to split a Welsh rabbit or a lobster with me and tell me if Broadway's still lighted up at night. You've got to—oh, just talk to me! I've been on the ragged edge of all the world for weeks."

"It's agreed with you," said Hazen dryly. "Been making a fortune? I noticed symptoms of trying to do that when I saw you last."

Lansing would have flushed if his coat of tan had not forbidden it.

"Don't talk about me," he said. "I'm a poor topic—and I'm sick of myself, anyhow. What's new in New York?"

Hazen talked gossip for a few minutes—and saw that Lansing's eyes wandered. Hazen hadn't acquired his commanding position in the law without wisdom and perception; he found it a little hard to suppress a chuckle.

"Seems pretty small, doesn't it?" he said sympathetically. "But it's as important as it ever was to your friend Brangwyn and the rest of them."

He had put his finger on the spot, and Lansing knew it. He was at loose

ends. Hopelessly out of touch with the life he had led before the Lansing smash, he had nothing to take hold of now.

"You were interested in Jim Hazzard, weren't you?" said Hazen, seemingly at random. "He's in a peck of trouble."

"Trouble? How?" said Lansing, startled. One might almost have seen him prick up his ears.

"He's likely to lose control of Western Film. Haven't you heard that he's been fighting with Cramer and Howell?"

"I heard he was trying to force them out," said Lansing. "But—hasn't he got control? That's the general impression."

"He had it—just as long as Dave Sears was alive," said Hazen. "Sears was his original partner—Cramer and Howell came in later. He got them when he had to have real money, and it's always been the eighth wonder of the world that those two pirates put up the cash without getting fifty-one per cent of the stock. I guess, if the truth were known, Jim managed to fool them some way—or else they found out that some one else was ready to put up the money if they didn't. And then, again, they may have thought they could handle Sears, who had just enough stock to swing the balance between them and Hazzard. Now Sears is dead—and Hazzard can't buy his stock."

Lansing's indifference had vanished. He was sitting up now, alert and keenly interested.

"How do you know?" he asked sharply.

"Because I happen to be counsel for Mrs. Sears," the lawyer answered. "There's no secret about it—a hundred men know the facts. Old Dave's will provided that his stock should be sold—I guess he understood that a woman, without any business training, needed something safer than Western Film as an investment. And it gave Hazzard first chance to buy the stock, with a time limit."

"Well—didn't he snap at it?" asked Lansing.

"Yes—the way a dog snaps at a bone that's just beyond his reach when he's chained up. He's half crazy. But Cramer and Howell have got him this time—and if he put anything over on them before, they're getting good and even now. I told you Hazzard was rated at a million and a half. And he hasn't been able to raise fifty thousand in cash—which is what he's got to have to get that stock. His time's up to-morrow—at noon. To-day, that is."

Lansing sat back and stared.

"And that means that the other two will get it?"

"Not a doubt in the world. They haven't been near me yet. But they're safe enough. No one would buy that stock except themselves—or Hazzard, of course. And they've seen to it that he's helpless. They've got Wall Street connections, and their own ways of keeping a man from getting hold of money if he's likely to interfere with them in using it. And Hazzard's tied up. He's the sort of man who won't let a dollar stay idle. A dollar in cash to him is just a basis of two dollars in credit."

"You're handling the Sears stock?"

"Yes—as executor. That's why I'm here. Selling that will wind up the estate, and his will was filed here for probate."

"If Cramer or Howell, or both of them, had come to you and asked for an option, in case Hazzard didn't exercise his, you'd have given it to them?"

"I wouldn't have had any choice. The will leaves me no latitude about that stock."

Lansing took a dollar bill from his pocket and laid it on the table between them.

"A dollar's consideration enough in

an option, isn't it?" he said. "Give me that option. I believe I can do as much with that stock as any one else. With what I've got already it means something. And—I'm ready to risk fifty thousand dollars on my hunch."

Hazen, astonished for once in his life, and unable to hide it, stared at him.

"You're crazy!" he said. "You can't play in that pasture, Bob! You'd be a little white, woolly lamb in a pack of wolves! You haven't got enough money to sit in that game!"

But Lansing's eyes were snapping, and his mouth had tightened into a straight, hard line.

"I'm making a bona-fide offer," he said. "You say yourself you've got no right to refuse it. And you're not looking out for my interests—your business is to sell that stock."

He got his option. Hazen stopped with the one remonstrance; he recognized, somehow, the futility of further protest. And Lansing, with his hat at a disgraceful angle, left the hotel, whistling, and sought the nearest telegraph office that was open all night. At the counter, he composed a long and explicit telegram to his New York bank. It contained none of the customary telegraphic abbreviations. Lansing determined to leave no room for error, since he desired a credit of fifty thousand dollars in Chicago well before noon. Noon in Chicago is one o'clock in New York; that gave a little more time for whatever formalities might be necessary. He was thankful for the foresight that had led him to make arrangements, before he left New York, for just such an emergency need of money. When he had done so, to be sure, he had contemplated nothing more than a possible accident, making the ability to draw a few hundred dollars quickly desirable. But, the arrangement once made, it was as easy to get fifty thousand as a hundred.

For the first night in a week or more of severely critical self-examination, Lansing went to sleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow. For good or evil, he had taken the same sort of plunge that men like Hazzard and Laemmle had taken. Like them, he had glimpsed an opportunity and had had the nerve to seize it. He might be right or wrong. Only the future could disclose that. And about the future he refused to worry. He had made his start!

CHAPTER V.

A STACK OF CHIPS.

The Whitestone Hotel looked like a moving-picture headquarters next morning. Lansing, finishing his coffee before nine o'clock, sat back and grinned to himself at the entrance of Hazzard. The big man drew all eyes to himself, as he always did. He couldn't help it; Lansing guessed that on this, of all days, he didn't want to do so. But he couldn't modify his bulk; seemingly he couldn't tone down the roar of his voice, either. And, if he was worried, his appetite appeared to be unaffected. A dyspeptic individual at the next table turned a little paler at the sight of Hazzard's breakfast: fruit, cereals, chops, eggs, bacon, a steak—pot after pot of coffee. Lansing, waiting for a telegram, stayed, with his c ,ar, to enjoy the sight.

And got a little more in the way of entertainment than he had bargained for. He was not far from Hazzard, who, of course, didn't know him. And the sight of the great veins in the big man's forehead, swelling up until they turned to an ominous purple, was his first warning that something strange was happening. A moment later he understood, as a waiter ushered two men, immaculate in the summer garb of New York, to another near-by table. Howell and Cramer! They saw Hazzard; feigned surprise and nodded cor-

dially to him. Both were small, dapper men; both had shifty eyes, that refused to linger anywhere long enough for an observer to look through them. Aside from that, though, they had nothing in common. Yet both had the predatory look. And they couldn't quite conceal their contempt for Hazzard and his swelling, apopleptic rage.

Enough food to have fed most men for a day still remained at Hazzard's place. Perhaps the sight of his enemies did finally curb his appetite, or he might simply have overestimated his needs. At any rate he heaved himself up from his chair and moved ponderously toward their table. Lansing leaned forward. Howell and Cramer were uneasy, but they held their ground. He saw Howell, who was facing Hazzard as he approached, say something; a greeting, he guessed, though he couldn't hear. Hazzard didn't speak. He moved on, came to rest at last, with his great hands on the table, which bent and swayed beneath his weight. For a full minute he stared at the pair. Lansing could see them wilt. Again Howell said something. And then Hazzard moved his hands, lowered his head menacingly.

"Bah!" he roared, and turned away.

A laugh ran around the room. Even the waiters joined for a moment. Little thrills chased up and down Lansing's spine. There was something superb about Hazzard's elemental wrath, about his supreme contempt for these men who had beaten him. He took his defeat hard, but he took it as a boy might have taken it, with a fine, unsophisticated disregard for the convention that calls for a seeming indifference to such a blow. Yet there was nothing boyish, but, on the contrary, something incredibly menacing, about his eyes—something that spoke eloquently of his confidence that another day, another chance, were coming to him.

Hazzard was gone. Something electric, tonic, went out of the room with him. It left Howell and Cramer looking amazingly cheap and small and tawdry. They tried to perk up at once, to laugh at the man who had scorned them so. But they couldn't do it. Lansing, any one else who chose to look at them, could see what a mockery it was. They were disconcerted, furiously angry, at Hazzard, at themselves, at one another. In less than a minute they were arguing viciously together. Lansing smiled. He took out his option, read it through, and smiled again. As he went out into the lobby he passed, deliberately, the table where they sat. They didn't look like powerful men, men who had been able to beat the mighty Jim Hazzard. But he knew their power, and he wondered what his relation with them was going to be when they knew the truth. They ignored him, of course. He meant no more to them than the waiter who poured their coffee. It amused Lansing to think of the pure chance that had thrown him into their path—the accident of a missed train that had led to his meeting with Hazen.

They had laid their plans well and worked their will against Hazzard with a diabolical sort of cleverness—he read that between the lines of what Hazen had told him. And now he, an utter stranger, an insignificant atom among a hundred million atoms as remote from them and their affairs as he had been yesterday, had taken a hand. Chance, of course, pure chance—but there had been no chance about his determination to get that option. There is a point in any series of events where chance must give way to an act of will. That is something that the people who attribute all the successes of life to chance—and all the failures, too—are prone to forget.

The answer to his telegram of the night came while he stood in the lobby;

he caught the bell boy at the first call of his name. It was brief and to the point, and, of course, affirmative. And he became busy immediately. At the bank there was red tape to be unwound. But he succeeded in proving that he was Robert Lansing, and it was only a little after eleven o'clock when he left the bank, carrying the equivalent of fifty thousand dollars in negotiable paper in the same envelope that contained his option. There was still time for him to draw back; he did not have to exercise his option. But the thought of withdrawing now had not occurred to him for a moment. All he wanted now was to close the deal and catch the first train for New York. He had planned that far ahead; he wanted more time for thought before he dealt with either Hazzard or his opponents.

He found Hazen, at half past eleven, twiddling his thumbs metaphorically in a Chicago lawyer's office.

"Sit down and wait—if you're still determined to make an ass of yourself," said Hazen. "Hazzard's gone back to New York—cleared out an hour ago. By Jove—I admire the old cutthroat! He came here to play his last card—lost—and wouldn't wait for the finish. Nine men out of ten would have hung around till the thing was settled. He's the tenth."

Lansing told him of the incident in the restaurant, and Hazen laughed.

"Just like him!" he said. "I tell you—I'd hate to beat him. It would be too much like winning the first round in a tussle with a buzz saw. You'd get it all the worse when you came back. By the way—I've been trying to puzzle out your idea. If you think you can hold those fellows up, make them bid against one another for that stock, forget it! You'll be like the man who interferes between husband and wife when they're fighting. They'll all turn on you. They'd think nothing of joining forces, squeezing you out, and then starting a new fight among themselves after they'd got rid of you."

"I don't doubt it," said Lansing. "I saw that last night—when I was wondering why no one else had tried to get the stock just to sell it to them. But that's not my idea at all. I want to sit in this game, that's all. Getting this stock is like buying a stack of chips. I'm going to stick around."

"All right—you're of age," said Hazen. He looked at his watch. "I'll close the whole thing at noon. Hazzard can't exercise his option, but it's as well to be careful about technicalities. I'm not supposed to know he's out of it until twelve o'clock."

They fell into a thoughtful silence. Lansing was making his plans; Hazen was studying him, seeing more and more a resemblance to his father that had never struck him before. A boy, knocking at the door, interrupted their reverie.

"Mr. Cramer and Mr. Howell, to see Mr. Hazen," he said.

Lansing got up, but Hazen rose, too.

"Sit down," he said. "I'll see them outside."

He left the door ajar, and in a moment Lansing heard Howell's thin, low voice, with its caressing note.

"I suppose we can do business with you now, Hazen, in the matter of the Sears stock in Western Film," he said.

"No!" said Hazen quietly. "I have every reason to suppose that the holder of an option will exercise his right."

"An option!" Howell's voice rose to a high squeak. "Jim Hazzard hasn't been able to put that over——"

"I didn't say it was Hazzard." Hazen's voice grew calm and low in pitch.

Some one closed the door, and after that Lansing heard only exclamations, meaningless fragments of sentences. It was over very soon; Hazen, flushed and angry, rejoined him.

"Infernal crooks!" he growled.

"They think I've gone in with Hazzard against them! Well—they can think so! Time's up! Have you brought the money?"

Lansing laid down his drafts. Afterward he was amused at the simplicity of the whole transaction. Within five minutes he walked out to the elevator, the owner of a small, but amazingly important, interest in Western Film. In the lobby of the building, he came upon Cramer and Howell, in the thick of a furious quarrel, that involved a vast amount of sputtering and gesticulation. Neither spared him a glance. He ran no risk of detection when he turned and smiled at them. Some of the busiest men in Chicago found the time to be amused by their violence.

CHAPTER VI.

NAPOLEONIC NOTIONS.

It must be admitted that Lansing, when he reached New York after breaking his way into Western Film, felt Napoleonic. It seemed to him that he had done a big thing. He had put Hazzard under a great obligation to him, though Hazzard didn't know it yet. By virtue of his small but important stock holding, he could demand and obtain a voice in the affairs of the corporation. Hazzard, he was sure, would have to make him a director—probably an officer. And that would give him a chance to put some of his ideas into practice. He felt that he could revolutionize the whole moving-picture industry. Without having worked out the details, he had in his mind a sort of picture of the future, in which he was to be responsible for the product of Western Film, the pictures themselves, while Hazzard applied his genius to financing and to the marketing of the films.

But if there is any proverb that has held its own through the changes of the centuries it is the one that has to do with the fall that is always lying in wait for pride, and the destruction that trips up a haughty spirit. Lansing's spirit wasn't exactly haughty, perhaps. But he had traveled, mentally, a long road since the mood of self-deprecation had left him.

After allowing what seemed to him a decent interval to elapse, following the transfer of his stock on the books of Western Film, without receiving the overtures he expected from either Hazzard or Hazzard's opponents, Lansing went to see Hazzard. And his first shock came when he waited for more than an hour in the reception room of the big, ornate office on Broadway. A good many others were waiting, too; actors and actresses, all sorts of active film workers, passed in and out.

He sat within sight of Hazzard's door; the big man's roaring voice identified it for him. And his resentment, which grew and flourished in the last half hour of his detention, was by no means mollified when he saw Cramer emerge, in his shirt sleeves. He had imagined a state of open war between Hazzard on the one side, and Cramer and Howell on the other. He had yet to learn of the swift adjustments of business quarrels; of the surprising readiness of such enemies to bury the hatchet—when both sides can make money, or save it, by doing so. His self-confidence was shaken ever so slightly when he was finally ushered into Hazzard's room. And it wasn't restored by the look he received from Hazzard. The big man looked at his card.

"Well, sir?" he said. "What can I do for you?"

"I—it seemed to me we ought to have a talk, Mr. Hazzard," Lansing ventured uncertainly. "I—I suppose you know that I have acquired some stock in the Western Film Corporation?"

"Have you?" asked Hazzard. "I

should say it was a good investment; I have quite a holding myself!"

"And you tried to get this stock of mine," said Lansing. He was beginning to get angry. "That's why it seemed to me we ought to have a talk."

"Oh!" said Hazzard. He laughed. And then he became suddenly the very incarnation of menace. His whole expression changed, and he leaned forward, his teeth bared. "I think I'm on to you, my friend!" he said. "Well—you can go to Cramer and Howell! You'll get nothing out of me! I don't want your stock—wouldn't take it at ten cents on the dollar! If you'd looked me up you'd have found I was a poor man to hold up!"

"My stock isn't for sale!" snapped Lansing. "I bought it to keep, not to sell! If you're trying to bluff me, quit it! I know all about the way things stand here. My stock carries control, and I know it! If I vote with you, you've got a majority—if I swing to Cramer and Howell, they have. I came here to tell you I was willing to work with you—under certain conditions."

Hazzard looked surprised for a moment. Then he began to laugh, and his mirth shook him and roused the echoes of the room.

"You'd like to be the tail that wags the dog—with your little block of stock!" he said finally. "Where do you get that stuff? Take your stock home and frame it! It's dead—it's out of the way—see? You've run up against business men, son, and I guess we'll get along without your help! You took that stock out of the market when you bought it. You don't cut any more ice than any one else who might happen to buy up a few stray shares! You don't want to believe every story you see in the papers—especially in the moving-picture trade papers! They've started a fight in Western Film about every six weeks since we organized the company, but you'll notice that business is still being done at the old stand!"

"All right!" said Lansing. "You don't have to talk business if you don't want to. But I'm not depending on anything I've seen in the papers. I *know* how you'd stand now if Cramer and Howell had got hold of the stock I bought. I know what the people who've got stock control can do to a corporation without going to jail. I came here to make a friendly arrangement with you—and if you haven't got any more sense than to try bluffing me I'll wait till you come to your senses!"

Again it must be admitted that Lansing felt a due sense of his own importance. His anger had banished the chastened mood that had been induc- by Hazzard's reception of him reason for this was that couldn't believe that Haz- up his quarrel with Cra- He stalked out, wit! zard's great laugh- he had sense e- anger and hi- He had a and How- adept ir make

Haz- a seve- blo- his confidence in own positio- was not severely shaken.

"He's so used to dealing with four-flushers and the cheap Broadway crowd that's hanging on to the movie business that he puts every one else in their class," he decided.

And so he wrote to Hazzard, generously overlooking the treatment he had received, and explained his ideas more fully than he had been able to do in their one-sided conversation. Hazzard's answer was prompt—and brief. He wrote that directors were elected at the annual meeting of the stockholders, of which notice would, in due course, be mailed to Lansing, at the

address credited to him on the company's books. Meanwhile, any proper questions that Lansing, as a stockholder, might choose to ask would be answered by the proper officer.

And before Lansing had absorbed the full effect of that letter he received another, signed by Howell, as secretary of Western Film—a brief communication, informing him that the directors had decided to pass the semiannual dividend. Increased expenses, the necessity for establishing a reserve fund, and a decision to spend a good deal of money for the construction of new studios were advanced as the reasons for this action.

No mention was made, however, of [illegible]her reason that supplied Broadway [illegible]sip. At least one trade paper [illegible]out actually mentioning [illegible]at same meeting of the [illegible]rectors had voted in- [illegible]o Hazzard, Cramer, [illegible]re than made up [illegible]' dividend. This [illegible]o confirm, to [illegible]poses, as it [illegible]oreover, [illegible]rs were [illegible]And [illegible]friend- [illegible]any reminder had given him, in Chicago, against the purc[illegible]se of Western Film stock.

Lansing, in spite of his mistaken notion concerning his power, was no fool. He had the quality of facing facts without blinking. And when [illegible]ok stock of the situation he saw [illegible]exactly as it was. Hazzard had chosen to enter into an alliance, more or less permanent, with Cramer and Howell, for the purpose of freezing him out. The next step might easily be a receivership, a reorganization, undertaken simply to make it impossible for him to hold his stock. He had very little pride or self-satisfaction left when he reached that conclusion.

But he still had his uncompromising jaw. And there was a fighting gleam in his eyes. Perhaps he was going to lose the fifty thousand dollars he had put into his purchase of a hand in the big game. But it would be after a fight—and he was prepared, if it should be necessary, to throw what money he had left after his first investment.

CHAPTER VII.

POKER TACTICS.

Lansing didn't avail himself of Hazzard's kind invitation to ask questions. Or, at least, he didn't ask them of the officials of Western Film. He obtained an election, instead, to the Screen Club, then beginning to become influential and important in the moving-picture world. Here he met men who were in touch with moving pictures on all sides. Actors, directors, publicity men, officials of various companies, all met on common ground in the club. And, most important of all for Lansing's purpose, it was the chief haunt of keen-eyed young men who represented the trade papers of the movies.

These men were omniscient. They knew everything about every company in the industry. For their papers they gathered news and advertising. For themselves they gathered information, recognizing that as the greatest asset they could have. Much of it they kept to themselves. Very little of the best news they obtained ever got into print. But, properly approached, they would emit bits of gossip, of scandal, that threw a vivid and highly interesting light upon what was going on behind the screen, so to speak.

One thing impressed Lansing mightily. It was an attitude that seemed to be shared by almost every one he met in the club, an attitude of profound contempt for the public.

"They'll stand for anything!" said Debrett, who, at thirty, was dean of the trade press. "There's no such thing as the moving-picture business. It's not a business—it's a charity! The people have got to have their pictures—that's all! They're mad about the films. There never was such a business! The funniest baseball fan that ever was isn't in it with a movie fan!

"The public takes any kind of a raw deal the manufacturers hand it and comes back crying for more. They stand for fake posters. They don't care how raw a fake is."

"That won't last," said Lansing. "And I believe there's more money in giving the public a square deal, even the way things are now, than in faking."

"There isn't—you're wrong, and that's the answer," said Debrett. "Some of the old companies are on the level now, and they're not making half the money the fakers are. It's just like the royalty game. On the patents. The licensed companies are paying big money to the holders of the original patents. Some of 'em started doing it without even being sued, like the Kalem outfit. And a gang of independents come along and don't pay. No one stops 'em. There's just so much velvet for them."

"It sounds well," said Lansing stubbornly. "But, just the same, I believe the big money's still to be made in this game. And I think the man who finds out what the public really wants, and supplies it, is going to make it, too. This movie industry's still in its wildcat days. It's booming. But there's a big smash coming if the boomers don't look out."

Debrett grinned. The story of Lansing's investment in Western Film was an open secret along Broadway by this time. And Debrett thought, of course, that Lansing was calling the grapes he hadn't been able to reach sour. Debrett, in his cynicism, simply reflected the atmosphere in which he lived and had his being. Not, of course, that there weren't honest, sincere men engaged in the manufacture and distribution and exploitation of films. Debrett himself had admitted that there were. But at this time, if these were not actually in the minority, they were obscured by the others, who were getting the big money. The plodders got as little attention, as little publicity, as does a conservative, old-fashioned bank, for instance, during the meteoric rise of mushroom institutions in a period of expansion. Lansing thought of that comparison. And he remembered that when the last panic had come it was the old-line banks that had saved the day, while the spectacular growths of boom times had collapsed. He didn't take Debrett very seriously. But he absorbed what the writer could tell him.

And it was a hint from Debrett that ended his inactivity at last, after weeks in which he had chafed at his inability to find a means of getting at the imperturbable Hazzard.

"Something doing," Debrett told him one day. "The patents people are getting ready to start something."

"What? It's pretty late in the day for infringement suits, isn't it? And I thought that was all pretty well settled, anyhow."

Debrett winked at him.

"So it is—theoretically," he said. "If you believe all you hear, you'll believe that Western Film isn't using an infringing camera—hasn't used one for two years. Keep your eyes open—that's all! Something coming off, all right."

That gave Lansing an idea. But it was luck, chance, whatever you please to call it, that showed him the way to use his idea. He spent some time every week in the studio on top of the Palisades that had seen his initiation into the movies. As a stockholder, he had some rights there, and Haines, the di-

rector, liked him, anyhow, and was independent enough to give him the freedom of the place. One day he was talking to Haines when Cramer came in. Cramer eyed him with veiled hostility and nodded. Haines greeted Cramer curtly; he was whole-heartedly on Hazzard's side, and took little stock in the armistice.

Cramer stayed for two hours. He arrived during the interval Haines allowed for luncheon, and when that was over, watched the making of a few scenes. At intervals he asked questions. How much did such an actor get? What was the wastage of film? Couldn't it be reduced? Was it necessary to keep the great batteries of lights in action so constantly? Wasn't a lot of time wasted in rehearsing a scene five or six times?

He had a perfect right to ask these questions. Lansing knew that, and knew, too, that he shouldn't be surprised at seeing Cramer here. But he was. He couldn't help wondering how soon Cramer would reveal the secret purpose that had brought him over. He had formed his estimate of Cramer long since. And it was that the man was constitutionally crooked; that he would rather take the devious, twisted path any time than the obvious, straight, short cut; that he wasn't capable of being loyal. And now, in Cramer's manner, there was something furtive. While he was engaged in the most innocent action he would look over his shoulder, as if he expected to be spied upon. Lansing had an intense conviction that Cramer was asking all his questions, making all his examinations of trivial things, so that those who saw him wouldn't know, after he had gone, what it was that he had really come to find out.

And so he started when, after he had gone over the whole studio, Cramer came to rest finally beside Steve Carter, the camera man, and started asking questions. Unobtrusively, he edged over toward them, catching Carter's disgusted grin on the way.

"Chap around the other day said he had a new camera," said Cramer. "Couldn't talk to him—didn't want to admit how little I knew about the thing. How does it work—eh? Show me how the wheels go round."

Carter winked at Lansing; then launched into an involved and technical explanation. Cramer, in spite of his confessed ignorance, asked no questions now. He listened intently, and seemed to understand the explanation, and to find it perfectly clear—though Lansing knew that, without some foreknowledge of the subject, he couldn't have done that. The explanation lasted while a set was being made; at the sharp call of "Camera!" from Haines, when that work was done, Cramer melted away unobtrusively.

To Lansing, who chose to follow him, and to cross the river with him, it seemed not without significance that Cramer, once he reached New York, went, as fast and as straight as a taxicab could take him, not to the Western offices, but to those of a firm of lawyers who represented the licensed interests. He didn't get out of his own taxi when Cramer alighted; instead, he told his driver to drive him through the park, unmindful of the extravagance of the proceeding. He wanted to think.

And the products of his thinking sent him to Hazzard that night. He had no proof worthy of the name. But he had what is likely, in the right hands, to be just as useful, a deep-seated conviction that his suspicions were well founded. And his suspicions went back to the old fixed idea that had taken him to Hazzard in the beginning. He was as little able to believe now as he had been then that Cramer and Howell were prepared to abandon their fight for the control of Western Film. And it was certain that, if he were right,

they had a weapon now that promised to be as effective as the one he had snatched from their hands in Chicago. His argument was a process of elimination, but it looked plausible to him.

He had seen Hazzard many times since his formal call upon him; on a few of the rare occasions when Hazzard showed himself in the Screen Club rooms, very often in restaurants, where a great deal of the really important business of the movie world was conducted. Hazzard always recognized him; seemed to make it a point, indeed, to greet him with a contemptuous, amused tolerance. Lansing had writhed once or twice under those greetings, when Hazzard had nodded to him, and then turned, with his great laugh, to his companions, evidently pointing him out.

So he knew where to find Hazzard, once he had made up his mind to go to him. The third restaurant he dropped into proved to be the right one; Hazzard was there, with three or four men Lansing knew by sight. He gave Lansing the usual greeting—and looked curious, even interested, when Lansing, instead of looking quickly away, smiled back at him. Two or three times more in the next few minutes he stole a look at Lansing; by assiduous attention, Lansing was always able to meet his eyes, so that Hazzard, with what would have been confusion in any ordinary man, shifted his gaze.

Hazzard's companions dropped off one by one. Others took their places. It was Hazzard's way to hold a sort of court. All sorts of propositions were made to him at these night sessions. He liked this, and encouraged the practice. It catered to a curious sort of vanity, and there was a practical reason, too. He could always plead that necessary data were in his office; that he must have time to consult them. In this new, curious business, so like a growing child, many men appeared with suggestions on which they demanded instant action. Hazzard was often glad of a good excuse to put them off and still keep them at his disposal. And so, though he was extremely hard to reach in his office, at night he was accessible to any one who chose to walk up to his table and introduce himself.

It was nearly midnight when Lansing observed signs of a breaking up of Hazzard's table. At once he paid his check; he was on his way to the door when Hazzard, roaring for his waiter, signed his own collection of checks, and rose. Lansing stopped to buy a cigar; he reached the sidewalk a step ahead of the big man.

"Buying automobiles with your Western Film dividends?"

Hazzard's great voice boomed in his ear. Lansing turned around.

"Oh, hello—going home so early?" he said. "Well, I should think you need some sleep!"

"Huh? . What?" said Hazzard. "What d'ye mean, young fellow?"

"Oh—nothing," said Lansing. "But you've got some busy days ahead of you, I guess."

"Busy days? What's eating you now? All my days are busy."

Lansing walked on, quickening his pace a little. Purposely he turned into a side street, though he knew that Hazzard's path lay straight up Broadway. Hazzard, as he had expected, followed.

"Well, I hope you win out—that's all," said Lansing finally. "I guess my Western stock's worth something now, even if it isn't paying dividends. But if this infringement suit gets going right and they tie you up with an injunction—well, it wouldn't be worth the frame you advised me to buy for it."

Hazzard's hand fell on his shoulder and spun him around under a street light. Hazzard glared at him. But

when he spoke his voice was soft, gentle, almost a purr.

"*What's* that?" he asked. "What d'ye mean—infringement suit?"

"You must know as much about it as I do," said Lansing. "After all you know, you can't expect to keep on using a camera that's a rank infringement of the basic patents forever. You're bound to be called sooner or later."

"You've been hitting a pipe," said Hazzard. "Our camera's not an infringement. I'll bet you can't name a single thing that even looks like an infringement."

"I think I can," said Lansing modestly. He tried to keep his excitement out of his voice. For this was the crucial moment. He had to bluff now, and the success of his whole plan depended upon his ability to handle Hazzard—a man who was reputed to understand more of the art of poker, as it is played, with and without cards, than any man in New York.

He had refreshed his memory before beginning his search for Hazzard. And now, in answer to Hazzard's taunt, he described from memory, not the camera used in Western studios, but the original, licensed camera. As he did it, Hazzard's jaw dropped. Then suddenly he swore.

"No one was supposed to know that," he said furiously. "I'll break some one for letting it out——"

"You can't blame any one for telling Cramer about it. He's entitled to ask about as many questions as he likes, I suppose. You even said I was——"

"Cramer!" said Hazzard. And at his tone, Lansing knew he had won his fight, knew that his bluff was not going to be called.

"Yes—Cramer. He got his information this afternoon. And it may interest you to know that he stopped at Gaskell & Flood's offices after he came back from Fort Lee."

"Cramer!" said Hazzard again. "I might have known they wouldn't play fair."

And at that, seeing the iron hot, Lansing struck quickly.

"My offer still stands," he said. "I'll vote my stock with you in any action you take against Cramer and Howell. And, for an emergency measure, I'll do it without conditions. We can settle those later."

Hazzard hesitated a moment. In it he stared hard at Lansing.

"I believe you're on the level," he said slowly, and with infinite surprise. "And—by George, I know you've got some common sense! You've backed the right horse if you want to make your stock worth something. All right, my son—I guess you've tipped me off in time to give me a chance to start something. Meet me at the Fort Lee studio to-morrow morning at eight-thirty. No—be at the office at eight, and I'll run you over in my car."

"Right!" said Lansing. "Good night."

CHAPTER VIII.

PLAYING FOR TIME.

Hazzard, when Lansing met him in the morning, was in a silent mood. There was a very brief delay at the big office building; it served for the sending of numerous telegrams.

"Taking no chances," Hazzard explained curtly. "I've stopped work in California—everywhere except Fort Lee. Not that I think they're ready to attack all along the line, but they might be. Here—take this."

Lansing, with some curiosity, read the paper Hazzard handed him. It was a formal notice of a special meeting of the stockholders of Western Film, signed by Hazzard as president.

"Cramer and Howell get 'em, too," said Hazzard. "And the people who hold one share of stock to qualify them. All right—we're off."

Hazzard drove himself, and they crossed the long Weehawken ferry in a high-powered, low-bodied runabout. As they sat, well up in the bow of the boat, Lansing looked northward and saw, through the haze that hung over the river, the slow progress of one of the uptown boats. Hazzard chafed at the slow pace of the ferryboat; but, once they were landed, he made amends for that. His car swung up the hill very fast, and, once they were on the level road that crowned the Palisades, he took all the chances possible with the speed limit.

The studio, when they reached it, presented the aspect of a fortified camp. A good deal of land went with it, and since yesterday, Lansing saw, barbed wire had been stretched about. Quick work! He had to admire the way Hazzard moved when he once started. A man stood by the only opening in the wire barrier, and he refused to let them pass until Haines appeared. Lansing chafed, but Hazzard chuckled.

"The man's right," he said. "It's what I'm paying him for. If he keeps me out he won't let other people in, I guess."

None of the actors had appeared yet; the studio was occupied only by what might be considered now a permanent garrison. Haines, Steve Carter, the camera man; Dunning, who looked after the properties and might have qualified as purchasing agent for a railway as a result of his experience; Roddy Thompson, the expert who manipulated the lights, and three broad-shouldered sceneshifters were on the job. And they were all busy. Dunning, who as props, had to be a jack of all trades, was temporarily a chief carpenter. Under his directions, and with the assistance of his skillful hands, the sceneshifters were building a big box—a sort of cross between the crate in which a piano is shipped and the sentry box seen at army posts.

Lansing felt like an outsider. Hazzard drew Haines aside, and, chuckling, they watched the swift growth of the box. It had a door on one side, but no bottom. And opposite the door a square piece was cut out, hinged and put back, like a window. When it was finished, Dunning looked at it approvingly, then proceeded to cover it with black cloth. Its use was revealed a minute later, when the all-important camera was set up and covered with the box. Through the open window the lens had free play; behind the camera there was room for the operator.

"Right!" said Hazzard. "Now—you understand, Haines? Only three people are authorized to enter that box. You, Carter, and myself. No one else on any pretext."

"Suppose they ring in a sheriff, with some sort of court order? Does our pay go on just the same in jail?"

"No—it's doubled. But don't let any one get at that camera—sheriff or any one else!"

"What's the idea?" asked Lansing. "They must have the facts."

"Maybe Cramer has," said Hazzard. "But they've got to have more proof. And I doubt if Cramer's got the nerve to get up in court and testify against what seem to be his own interests, anyhow. Bluffed me last night, didn't you?"

"Eh?" said Lansing, startled.

"I don't mind—it was the right thing. But I've been thinking over your description of our camera. You got the basic things right, but it was the licensed camera you described in detail. Now you'd better tell me exactly what you did know. I'm for you now—any one who can bluff me overnight I'm going to have on my side."

Lansing laughed, and told him the whole story truthfully. From time to time Hazzard nodded.

"All right," he said briefly. "I sized you up wrong. Well—if you were

looking for trouble, son, you landed right where old man Trouble lives. I think we've got 'em stopped for the time. Unless they can see this camera, get absolutely unshakable expert witnesses to give technical evidence of an infringement, they can't do much. They can't get an injunction on hearsay."

"Can't you work without an infringing camera?"

"Can't be done. Their patents, if they stand, sew up the whole game, give 'em a monopoly. I don't believe they'll stand. I think they've claimed too much—like Selden. By the time the thing gets up to the supreme court we'll have them licked. But—it's no time to be tied up with that sort of litigation. They've got the bulge right now, if we get into court. They've got the money. We haven't—not where we can get at it. We've had to put all we had and all we made back into the business. They're past that stage, and they've got the banking connections, too, that we haven't made yet. We're running on a cash basis. Ever stop to figure our pay roll, our bills for film, for printing, for expressage? Cash—every cent! We can show a balance every Saturday night, with all bills paid for that week."

"Hold on!" said Lansing suddenly. "You know the facts about this camera, don't you? What's to prevent their bringing an infringement suit, nailing you as a witness, and holding you for contempt if you refuse to answer?"

"Nothing—if they get me," said Hazzard. "That's why I'm not coming back here for a while."

"I think I'll stick around," said Lansing. "Looks to me as if there might be some fun."

"I expect to keep you busy," said Hazzard grimly. "I'm going back to the office now. You stay here—and then come over on the ferry. I don't want you to be seen with me just yet. When you come to the office ask for Brewer. You'll be taken from his office to mine. Understand?"

"Right!" Lansing nodded; a minute later, Hazzard's automobile was vanishing in a cloud of dust. And within half an hour the studio, save for the shrouded camera, had assumed its normal busy aspect. Actors and actresses, surprised by the barbed wire, the mysterious box, were rather pleased, too. Those of them who were afflicted with artistic temperaments enjoyed the mystery. And Lansing was a little startled when a girl spoke to him, hailing him cordially by name. Then he remembered her. She was Mary Brewster, the extra girl of his first day, who had so impressed him. Since then she had impressed others, too; she was playing a part now. Haines saw him watching her as she worked before the camera.

"There's a girl with a future," he said. "If she gets over being so fresh! You can't tell her anything. At least—you can tell her, and she listens, and does just what you say in rehearsal. And then, with the camera turning, she does just as she darn pleases and says she forgot or thought it would look better."

"Well—does it?" asked Lansing, grinning.

"Most of the time—yes," admitted Haines. "But that's not the point. She's supposed to do as she's told."

"She never will," said Lansing. He looked at her thoughtfully. "The trouble with her, Haines, is that she's meant to be a star. Boost that girl—advertise her everywhere—and she'll be to the films what Ethel Barrymore or Maude Adams is to the legitimate."

"Tell it to Sweeney!" scoffed Haines. "And for the love of Mike don't let her hear you! Her head's big enough now! That's the trouble, anyhow. A lot of these people are getting so they think they're the whole thing. Salaries are

going up. It's all wrong. The public don't care who's in a film. The Biograph people have the right idea. They don't let the public know who their actors are. Keeps their people from getting a swelled head."

"You'll wake up some time," said Lansing. "I'll bet you that it won't be long before you see movie stars being featured just like Bernhardt and Forbes-Robertson. Go on with your slave driving. I'm off to Manhattan."

At the entrance he found the sentinel firmly barring the entrance of two men who couldn't account for themselves. One, immaculate, keen-eyed, stood aside, smiling faintly. The other, a shabby, furtive man, was doing the arguing. Lansing, with a sudden stirring of the latent detective instinct in him, looked at his watch. A car was due in five minutes. The last one had arrived twenty-five minutes before. How had these men come—since it was to be presumed that they had only just arrived? Halfway down the hill he stopped. He looked down the road that led toward Fort Lee and Weehawken. Perhaps a hundred yards away an automobile was standing. He made his way over a stone wall, took cover in an apple orchard, and got within sight of the car. In the tonneau, smoking a cigar, was Cramer. That settled any lingering doubts Lansing might have had.

He didn't go up and accuse Cramer. Instead, chuckling, he went back, caught the trolley with a swift dash, and made his leisurely way back to the city. He had no fears as to what might have happened at the studio. Carter and Haines, he knew, would smash the camera before they would let any unauthorized person see it.

Getting into Hazzard's office proved slightly difficult and highly amusing. Cramer, of course, wasn't in the offices, but the situation was complicated by the continued presence of Howell. Howell's door was open, as Lansing saw when he was conducted into the room of Brewer, Hazzard's secretary and confidential man. And Howell, in his shirt sleeves, peered at him.

"Nice mess!" said Brewer disgustedly. "The boss is afraid to curse Howell out, even—it'd be just like that sneak to have a subpoena ready to hand out! Still, there's one or two things about this floor and this whole building that Howell don't know yet."

Lansing discovered the truth of this. In Brewer's office was a great safe. It looked as if only a wrecking crew could move it. But Brewer lifted a rug and disclosed a little arrangement of rails; on these, so delicately was it balanced, the great safe moved at a touch. Moving, it disclosed a door, which, on being opened, led into Hazzard's room. Once it had closed behind him, Lansing couldn't see the door at all.

"Did you have this doped out when you moved in here?" Lansing asked in astonishment.

"Bet your life!" said Hazzard. "Say—they talk about the way Jay Gould and Jim Fisk used to dodge process servers! I bet I've got them skinned a mile. I've known a good many times when getting away from a subpœna was all that kept me out of the bankruptcy court. Sit down."

Hazzard had spread certain papers out on his desk.

"I've got to disappear," he said. "I guess you know it, so I don't mind admitting that this is the tightest corner they've had me backed into yet. I've got them licked at that—but I've got to have the time to do it. So I'm taking to the tall timber to-day—right now. You and Brewer have got to swing things between you while I'm gone. Brewer'll vote my stock at this meeting that's been called—he's got my proxy. Here's everything that's to be done. Read those notes and see if you get it."

As he obeyed, Lansing whistled.

And he put the papers down with a nod that expressed admiration and surprise together.

"Fighting fire with fire," said Hazzard. "I know what you're going to say, but these people haven't got clean hands to go into court with. They'll stand the gaff because they can't do anything else. All right?"

"All right," said Lansing. "I'm game."

There was nothing dignified about the manner in which Hazzard disappeared. Brewer went before him to clear the path, which led to the roof. And Lansing, looking for excitement, went along. They took Tim Riley, the gray-coated special officer of the building, along. And Riley, thoroughly enjoying his part, arrested a slinking youth in ill-fitting clothes for loitering on the roof. The coast proved to be clear on the next roof and the next. But Lansing, scrambling from one to the other, had to smile at the thought of how Hazzard would look, following in their footsteps.

He wasn't privileged to see that. For, while Hazzard was making his get-away, he and Brewer staged a little comedy downstairs. They went openly into Hazzard's room first, with Howell's eyes following them. When they emerged, Brewer carried a suit case. Lansing hung back long enough to see Howell go to his window. Then he joined Brewer; from the lobby they carried the bag to Hazzard's conspicuous and well-known roadster. At a word from Brewer, the chauffeur started the engine, and the secretary and Lansing looked back anxiously at the revolving doors of the building. Tim Riley, who had disposed of his captive in an empty room, appeared suddenly, shooing all loiterers from the lobby.

A seedy man got between Brewer and the car. And, at just about that moment, Lansing, looking up the street, saw a taxicab start uptown. From its rear window a handkerchief was waved.

"All right, Dick," he said to the chauffeur. "Off with you—you know where to go."

The car started. The seedy man exclaimed as it sent him spinning; two other men, who had seemed to know the seedy one, sprang into a taxicab and gave chase. Riley, Lansing, and Brewer, grinning broadly, went back upstairs. Brewer tried Hazzard's door and found it locked. At his elbow Howell appeared.

"I want this nonsense stopped, Mr. Brewer," he said in his high, squeaky voice. "I demand that Mr. Hazzard see me at once."

"Mr. Hazzard isn't in, sir," said Brewer respectfully. "I think—er—that is, I believe he has gone out of town."

"Don't lie to me!" said Howell. "I've been watching his door, and he hasn't gone out."

Silently Brewer unlocked and opened the door.

"See for yourself, sir," he said.

The room, of course, was empty. And even Lansing and Brewer didn't know where Hazzard had gone. It is possible, however, that Brewer, had he been willing to do so, might have made a good guess. He had had time to become familiar with Hazzard's methods.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BIG BLUFF.

The first two or three days after Hazzard's flight dragged for Lansing. There had been the little interlude of excitement; he had the tremendous satisfaction of knowing he had set in motion wheels that were really too big for him to push. His old admiration for Hazzard had been sharply reawakened. But, when he stopped to think, he saw that he hadn't, after all, accom-

plished very much for himself. It was true that he would be "in" Western Film hereafter, if Hazzard beat Howell and Cramer and their allies. But he would be in on sufferance; because Hazzard was grateful to him, or had decided that he would make a good cat's-paw. At best he would play tail to Hazzard's kite, and he saw, all at once, that that wasn't at all what he wanted. He might conceivably make a great deal of money as a satellite of Hazzard—might be written about at some future time as the millionaires of Pittsburgh who were made by Carnegie are written about now in the Sunday newspapers.

But Lansing didn't want to play second fiddle to any man. He went back to his original impulses, and found that he wasn't in the way of obeying them. He regretted nothing. Everything that had happened since the day he had first crossed the Fort Lee ferry had added to his experience. And now, all at once, in the time he had for reflection while he waited for Hazzard to strike, all that experience crystallized, came, so to speak, to a head. A good many men are like Lansing. They go along, listening, observing, and scarcely knowing themselves that they are doing so. Then, all at once, they find themselves with complete conception of whatever it is they have been studying. There is no other way of accounting for the sudden rise of certain baseball players, who, from seemingly hopeless mediocrity, become stars between October and April.

So, all at once, Lansing saw two things. He saw what was wrong, what was rotten, in the great movie industry. He saw that it was headed, surely and perhaps swiftly, toward disaster. And he saw, just as clearly, what had to be done—what one man, at least, could do. He saw how he, Robert Lansing, could launch a new enterprise and be, despite the start the earlier men had on him, the pioneer in a virgin field.

But he didn't have money enough to go ahead. He didn't regret his impulsive action in Chicago. He guessed that he might never have seen his real opportunity without the experiences of the last few weeks. So he had sense enough not to repine. And he faced squarely the fact that for the present he was and must be the tail of Hazzard's kite, and that unless the kite rose he himself never could leave the ground. The great thing, after all, was that he intended to change all that; that he wasn't a bit deceived, as a good many men in his position might have been, by the chance that lay in sticking by Hazzard after the urgent necessity for doing so had ended.

"These people and their fights!" he said to himself rather scornfully. "They fight among themselves as if the result would really settle anything—and they forget all about the public, that can smash 'em all—and will, if they don't give it what it wants. It doesn't know what movies can be yet—the public. But some one is going to show it sooner or later."

The idea, of course, was that that some one was to be Robert Lansing. But that was an idea he preferred, for the time, to keep strictly to himself.

And meanwhile the time came for the special meeting of the stockholders of Western Film. Howell took the chair in Hazzard's absence, and Cramer at once moved to adjourn. But Brewer presented Hazzard's proxy, and he, Lansing, and the dummies who had been endowed with a share apiece of Hazzard's stock voted that motion down. Then consulting, from time to time, slips of paper Hazzard had given them, Lansing and Brewer proceeded to declare vacant the offices of vice president and secretary, held by Howell and Cramer, and also their director-

ships. Cramer and Howell protested, but without spirit.

"You can do this, of course," said Howell darkly. "But it won't do you any good. And I can tell you, if you know where to reach Hazzard, you'd better get hold of him mighty quick and tell him to come back."

But, though it looked as if the game were in their hands, he and Cramer both looked worried. And after the meeting they sought Lansing out separately, and made veiled suggestions that he ought, in his own interests, to detach himself from Hazzard. He was polite, but otherwise unsatisfactory. He wasn't associated with Hazzard, he explained. On questions that had come before the meeting, he added, he had voted according to his own judgment, which might be mistaken, but wasn't to be changed.

On the fourth day of Hazzard's absence the opposition seemed to decide that no more time was to be lost. Without waiting for his appearance, counsel for the licensed interests began their infringement suit. But Hazen, to whom Lansing took the papers, laughed.

"They can't get even a temporary injunction if that's all the evidence they've got," he said. "And I suppose Hazzard has buried every one who's really qualified to describe that camera?"

"I guess he has," said Lansing.

So far things don't look so bad. But—Hazzard couldn't stay away indefinitely. He would have to come back. And, sooner or later, too, the opposition could get the facts it needed. Hazen agreed with him that if that happened the situation would be critical—and worse than critical. Even if Hazzard was right, and the patents in question were held to be too comprehensive to cover fundamental things that should never have been included in any patent, there was bound to be serious trouble if it came to an injunction.

And, as it turned out, Hazzard hadn't been able to stop every leak. Within a week a temporary injunction was granted on evidence that was secured, not at Fort Lee, but in Florida. And on that day, Lansing, worried more seriously than he was willing to admit, even to himself, got a wire from Hazzard. It had been filed in Buffalo; it asked him to meet Hazzard's train, a famous flyer from Chicago, on its arrival. Lansing obeyed; thought of an improvement, even. Instead of waiting in New York, he went up the line to the place where steam power gives way to the electric current, and found Hazzard dozing in his compartment.

"Good boy!" said Hazzard at sight of him. "Shoot now! Tell me everything that's happened. I've had code telegrams from Brewer, but he didn't put much in—wasn't sure I'd get them probably."

Lansing obeyed.

"All right," said Hazzard. "I guess they're a little worried. Mamma! Wait till I'm through with them!"

He smoked silently, thoughtfully, until they were in the tunnel.

"Used to be one of these afternoon tea sports, didn't you?" he flung at Lansing suddenly. "Hardest work you did was spending pop's money or playing a game of tennis now and then maybe?"

"Something like that," admitted Lansing cheerfully.

"One of the Four Hundred, eh?"

"There's no such animal—but yes, to what you mean—not what you said."

"H'm! Lot of rich friends? Millionaires? Fellows with so much money they don't know how to spend it? Steam yachts—pictures in the paper—breach-of-promise suits—lots of publicity about their kale?"

Lansing laughed at the picture. A

few months before he would have resented it bitterly. But his viewpoint had changed.

"Any intimate friends like that?" Hazzard persisted. "Any you know well enough to slap on the shoulder and call by their first names?"

"Some, I guess."

"Well—any one in particular? One who's got all sorts of money—and every one knows he's got it? In a class with the Astors and the Vanderbilts for big money?"

The shining, cheerful face of Sandy Brangwyn rose before Lansing's eyes. It brought a new smile. But then he frowned suddenly, fiercely.

"Yes," he said, "I've got a pal like that—I guess he'd qualify on all your counts."

"And you know him the way I said? So he'd do anything you asked?"

"Yes," he said gravely. "But—he won't be asked, Hazzard. I'm ready to back your play any way I can myself, but I can't borrow from my friends——"

"Don't want his money," said Hazzard. "Who said anything about borrowing money? I want to borrow him. You go get him, see? Bring him to my office. Just walk in with him, and tell him to nod to me real friendly."

"If you'd explain——" suggested Lansing.

"No time. And I don't like explanations, anyhow. Bad thing to talk about your plans, Lansing. Liable to start a jinx working to get you. I want this friend of yours to act as if he stood for me—with me—see? He don't need to say anything. Just call him by name. If he looks like a saphead, so much the better."

The grinding of the brakes as the train pulled into the station cut off further explanations. And, absurd as the whole thing seemed, Lansing knew he would do what Hazzard asked. He had shaken off the spell of Hazzard's personality to some extent in his days of clear thinking and planning while the big man was away. But that personality reasserted itself as soon as he was in direct contact with it again. He remembered Sandy Brangwyn's daily schedule pretty well—having lived his own life, for some years, on very much the same sort of schedule. In the middle of the afternoon he could count on finding Brangwyn at a certain club, if he were in town at all. A cab carried him to the club, and Brangwyn greeted him like a man returned from the dead.

"I want you," said Lansing. "Need some help, Sandy——"

"How much?" asked Sandy, reaching for a check book. And not offensively, either. He was that sort.

"Nothing like that, Sandy. Worse. I want you to come along with me. Sort of game. Bit like charades, I guess. Game?"

"I'll try anything once," said Sandy. He liked the phrases of the moment. He always had a choice stock of them. And, though he usually adopted the one of most recent invention even before it got into the comic sections of the newspapers, he clung to such sayings long after every one else had given them up. There was a certain method in this. He very seldom had to invent a complete sentence when he talked.

"I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way," he said as Lansing hailed a passing taxi.

"You're going into the movies," said Lansing. "We're on our way to Jim Hazzard's office. Your play is to be friendly with him. Act as if he were an old pal."

This, of course, would be easy for Brangwyn. He was friendly with every one. And he entered the offices of Western Film with a broad grin, which grew expansive at the sight of a pretty Western actress who was waiting for the elevator.

"Sly dog, Bobbie!" he said. "So

this is where you've been hiding your light! Ah, there, Bobbie!"

He fairly beamed when Lansing stopped to speak to Brewer, on guard at Hazzard's door.

"Go right in," said the imperturbable Brewer. "Howell's in there—and Raeburn."

"Raeburn!" said Lansing, with something like a gasp. For Raeburn, beyond all question, was the power behind Howell and Cramer, the bitterest, the most powerful, the most ruthless, of Hazzard's enemies.

"And some lawyers," added Brewer, smiling very faintly. "But go on in—Mr. Hazzard's expecting you."

Only Lansing noticed Hazzard's quick look at Brangwyn, and the relief that came into his eyes. Sandy played up beautifully; he nodded carelessly to Hazzard, and shook hands. And he continued to beam. His expression indicated that he would nod to all the men present and shake hands with them too, if he knew them, and would be delighted to do it, just because he found them in the office of a man he liked as much as he did Hazzard.

"I brought Brangwyn along," said Lansing. "But if you're not ready——"

"Sit down—won't be a minute!" said Hazzard expansively. "Too bad to take Mr. Brangwyn's time up this way—but business is business!"

Lansing wanted to get a chance to study the men in the room. Their expressions made the task worth while. Raeburn had started when he saw Sandy; Lansing hadn't overestimated the fame—some called it notoriety—that Sandy had acquired. He and his millions were known to the company beyond doubt. And now Lansing began to understand what sort of game it was that Hazzard was playing. Sandy, with his millions, didn't have to propitiate this interest and that to keep them. His money came from Manhattan real estate, bought by his ancestors when an acre cost as much as a square foot does now, and he could lay his hands on as much cash as some fairly big banks at a week's notice.

"Now!" Hazzard's voice rose to his familiar roar as he turned to Raeburn. "You can see the options I've got. Is that infringement suit going through—or will it be withdrawn to-morrow?"

Raeburn hesitated; seemed to be on the verge of apoplexy.

"I want to talk to you alone for five minutes," he said at last.

"Make it short," said Sandy, as Hazzard rose and led the way to the door. "We've got to talk, too, you know."

Hazzard smiled. They could hear his roaring voice from time to time; Lansing guessed he was using Howell's old room. And in less than five minutes they were back. Raeburn stopped at the door.

"Come on!" he said to his crew. "We've settled it."

"He's right," said Hazzard to Lansing and Sandy. He began to laugh, and before he stopped there were tears in his eyes.

"They thought they had me—and they did," he said. "I couldn't have beaten that infringement suit—not until they'd put me out of business. They'd have got all our exchanges. That was what they were after chiefly. So—I went out and got as many of theirs as I could. Raeburn guessed I was bluffing—told me I didn't have the money to close my options."

"You didn't," said Lansing.

"Of course I didn't. That's where——"

"Oh, I see!" said Sandy, chuckling. "That's where I came in. By Jove, that's some bluff! I—I swear I'd have made good for you if you'd been called."

"There wasn't a chance—once you were here," said Hazzard scornfully. "I've played poker with Raeburn. I know his limit."

Then he turned to Lansing.

"Son," he said, "I'm going to pull you along with me. I handed you a raw deal at the start, but you've made good. I'll make your stock worth ten times what you paid for it——"

"Go ahead," said Lansing. "But—you can have the stock. I'll turn it over to you to-morrow for what I paid and the dividend you skinned me for. I've had enough."

Hazzard's whole manner changed.

"Want to quit?" he said sharply. "*All* right. You've got to now. That's one thing I never let a man change his mind about. Give Brewer the figures—you'll get your check when you deliver the stock. Going to quit the movies, eh?"

"I didn't say that," laughed Lansing. "I'm going into the business myself. Put me down among your rivals."

Hazzard had proved himself clever. But he wasn't quite clever enough to know the truth when he heard it. Perhaps this was because his opportunities in that line had been limited in those wild days of the first great strides of the movies.

CHAPTER X.

A LITTLE REFORM WORK.

Now that Lansing's decision was made his seemingly wasted hours stood him in good stead. He had picked up an astonishing amount of irrelevant knowledge that now acquired relevance. Best of all, it seemed to him, was his knowledge of just where to find Cliff Martyn. Martyn was a director—and he was the man of all men Lansing wanted for the actual making of the pictures he had it in mind to produce. He found him in a saloon near the ferryhouse at Forty-second Street and the North River, consorting with longshoremen and others of more uncertain occupation. Martyn had been doing what men usually do in saloons, and doing it to excess. But three hours in a Turkish bath a few blocks east restored him to his senses. He faced Lansing, across a chilled grapefruit and a pot of steaming coffee, wrapped in contrition and the voluminous sheet that is fashion's last word in Turkish bathhouses.

"I'm a bum, Lansing," he said earnestly. "Sheehan's third-rail whisky's too good to go to pickling me. I know it—now. I tell you so. I'm ashamed of myself. But what's the use? To-night or to-morrow night you could find me again—maybe not in Sheehan's, but if not there, in Mike's place, or Casey's or the Dutchman's."

"I think not," said Lansing, with decision. "Look here, Cliff—I need you in my business. A year ago you could have licked me maybe. Right now I could put you out in one round. And—that's just what I'll do if you get soused again till I give you the word."

Martyn straightened up and stared at him.

"What's the answer?" he said. "How do you mean you need me? It was only one thing I was good for—and I can't get a job doing that."

"Maybe not," said Lansing. "But the job's got you. Listen! Isn't that why you've been trying to drink up all the red liquor on the West Side—because you couldn't get back on the job?"

"Shouldn't wonder," said Martyn dismally. "What's the odds? I'm not blaming any one. I was in with the first, with the old trust crowd. And then the independents offered me more money, and I quit. That's why the licensed people won't take me on again. I don't blame them—they gave me fair warning. But these last people—stinting me on money and making me throw down people I'd hired in good faith. Say—a yellow dog wouldn't stand for the way they acted! They were just

looking for a chance to beat my contract—so when I got full——"

Lansing knew that. He knew, too, that there was something to be said on the other side. This man Martyn was an artist, if there was one in the movies. He came closer to genius than any one concerned in the actual making of pictures. And the mention of his name in the Screen Club, at any hour of the night or day, would loosen a veritable deluge of stories about his temperament.

"Cliff Martyn!" Debrett had said. "The trouble with that guy is that money don't mean anything to him. When he's making a picture he isn't thinking about getting a profit out of it. His idea is to make the best picture there is, and hang the expense! He don't care how much sweating the business end has to do to make the film pay for itself or show a profit."

Lansing knew this, believed it, and could see exactly how impossible it had been for Martyn's former employers to do business with him. The quality of any particular film had nothing to do with what it brought from the exhibitors. The rentals were fixed by the stern and absolute law of competition. For a first run the price was so much a foot, and that price went down to the vanishing point with the passing of time and the release of the film to the little five-cent, two-shows-a-week houses. The system made for mediocrity, but it was the best one yet devised. Sometimes a manufacturer splurged and spent far more on the making of a feature than he could hope to get back. But he did it for a purpose, and charged the loss to advertising—which was a different thing from charging it to the artistic temperament of Cliff Martyn.

And yet, though he planned to start his enterprise on what Hazzard or any of the other big men would have called a shoe string, on a basis that would involve watching the spending of every dollar, it was this spendthrift of the films that Lansing wanted for his director. So badly did he want him, indeed, that he felt it would be useless to go on unless he got him. And the reason was that he, Lansing, was willing to stake all he had on his belief that he had discovered a new way to reach the public. He felt that he was going, after all, to turn his spade over in virgin ground.

"I want you to get straightened out," he said to Martyn. "I want you to go away from this town to-day—at once. Get back to nature. Get the alcohol out of your system. Get your skin clear and wipe the red lines out of the whites of your eyes. And while you're doing it I'll be here or hereabout, getting things ready. When I want you I'll send for you. I'll have a studio and a play for you to work with. And then I want you to make me the best moving picture that's ever been taken. I want you to forget every rule every other company in the business ever had and work out your own idea of what the public will like."

"Gee!" said Martyn. "That sounds like a fairy tale! You mean you'd give me a free hand—money and all?"

"Up to the limit of my bank roll on money and without any limit every other way. If you want to spend money and I have to say no it'll be because I haven't got it—not because it would mean spending more than the film could make. Because—the way I'm going to handle this proposition there isn't any limit to the money the film can make. Get that? There isn't any limit to the money a first-class play can make, is there?"

"No."

"You bet there isn't! Look at some of the big successes just in the last few years. If the play's good enough it'll make the money. And I don't see why it shouldn't be so with a film.

Now—are you willing to go in with me? You'll get enough to live on while the film's being made—which doesn't include anything for booze. So will I. Every cent is going into the production. But—you'll get an interest in the company I'm going to incorporate to handle this thing. The more money the film—and the others that follow it—makes, the more you'll get. You and I'll be in the same boat. Now—does that sound like something worth doing?"

"Would a life belt look good to a man who'd fallen overboard in the middle of the ocean? I'll go you—and I'm beginning to see what you're driving at, too. I believe we can do it."

They shook hands very solemnly.

"But—look here!" said Martyn. "I mean every word of this—now. I know you've got the right dope. But—I've been hitting it pretty hard lately. How do you know I can quit? I don't know it myself. I intend to—now. But every man does when he's been boiled out in a hot room. I might fall off the wagon again any time."

"You'd better not. Because—you'll fall into a whole heap of trouble the first time you do. I meant what I said. The first time I see you tipping your elbow we're going to find out which is the better man, and if I can lick you, believe me I'll do it to the queen's taste. I'm not bluffing—I've got an idea that treatment's got the gold cure and all these slip-it-in-his-coffee-when-he's-not-looking powders backed off the boards for results.

"Heavens above, man! What is there for you in being a tank? You don't enjoy waking up with a head that makes you want to put on the waste-basket for a hat when you go out to breakfast. You don't enjoy anything about this game. You want to get back—to have people talk about you as the man who *is* the best director in the movies, instead of as the one who might be or used to be. And you're going to be busy. When I send for you to come back you won't have time for Sheehan's or the Dutchman's or any other bar. We'll be working against time then to get the picture done before our cash gives out."

"I'll go you," said Martyn. "You're dead right. I guess there's a chance for me—because I never did like the stuff or what it does to you. If I've got something better to do I can let it alone. And I don't need any of that back-to-nature stuff, either. I'm ready to start work to-morrow."

"Work isn't ready for you yet," said Lansing. "And you may feel fine now, and think you're fit to do anything. But you're not. After a couple of days your nerves would begin yelling at you. I know just the place for you, and I guess I can fix it for you."

He had no hesitation this time in appealing to Sandy Brangwyn. He guessed that Sandy was about due at his camp in Maine, and he knew that Sandy made a point of respecting that State's best-known law while he was in residence there. There was no difficulty about the matter.

"Delighted!" said Sandy. "I get you, old top—what? He won't know a cocktail if he meets it outside the station when he comes back. You leave it to me. If I'd ever had to work for a living I'd have been a doctor—what? Old Doc Brangwyn! Bring him along to the train to-morrow—and then forget him. You won't know him when you see him again."

Lansing heaved a sigh of vast relief when he saw the little party off to Maine. Sandy was not without his faults. His best friends didn't call him brilliant. He had few ideas, very few. But when he got one it had plenty of room in his head, and it grew and filled the whole space. Lansing had no idea how Martyn would react to this some-

what heroic treatment. But he could trust Sandy.

And, for himself, he began to be very busy. He had to acquire the plant and equipment of his studio, nebulous, a thing that existed as yet only in his own mind. And straightway he became a bargain hunter. He accomplished wonders, for he intended to spend just as little as he could until operations had begun. He knew how pitifully small his capital was for the enterprise he had in mind. Once more his stock of seemingly useless knowledge proved invaluable. Here, there, and everywhere he bought what had to be on hand before any sort of start could be made.

And then, cautiously, lest he give himself away too soon, he began negotiations for the right to produce the play he had fixed upon as the first production. It wasn't a new play, but it had been tremendously successful in its time, some years before, and so was reasonably sure to strike a familiar chord when it was advertised as he meant to advertise it. Moreover, it had been the vehicle of a star who had not scored a real success since it had closed its run. That had weighed heavily in his selection. He wanted a star of the legitimate theater, and he knew he didn't have money enough even to interest those who were reveling in current hits. This man he had in mind might be more willing to take a chance.

But, knowing Martyn and his temperament, Lansing postponed definite action in these matters until his return. Getting the studio into shape—he had located it on his old stamping ground, atop the Palisades, quite naturally—took a lot of time. So his dealings with his prospective star and with the owners of the play he wanted were only tentative. He carried them only far enough to be able to lay a definite plan before Martyn when he finally sent for him. He was ready for his director in less than a month, and at the station he greeted a Cliff Martyn who had filled out and straightened up, whose eyes were white where eyes should be white, and not streaked with red, and whose skin was as brown as that of a healthy boy.

"No need to ask how you feel," said Lansing, with deep content.

"There aren't any words for it," said Martyn, breathing deep. "I haven't felt like this since Hector was a pup."

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNCUT TRAIL.

They got down to work at once. Lansing had opened an office in a building near Longacre Square—not as imposing a procedure as it appeared to be just then, since office buildings were going up far ahead of a coming demand. The office was a modest affair; aside from Lansing himself the working force of the Lansing Film Company consisted, at this time, of one stenographer. Lansing and Martyn sent her out to lunch and got down to business.

"You'd better tell me just what you've got up your sleeve," Martyn began. "First—I haven't got cold feet. I'm for you, first and last, and in the middle. But—if you're planning to go into this game on a shoe string, you'd better save your stake. It can't be done. The exchanges——"

"Are all controlled by one group or another," Lansing finished it for him. "I know that. But the State's rights men aren't."

Martyn threw up his hands.

"Good Lord! If you'd told me you had that bee in your bonnet I could have choked you off—even if I had a hang-over!" he said. "To begin with, they're buying outright prints of foreign films. Practically all the big features the State's rights men are handling are from abroad. In a way,

they're good, too. But you can't figure on them. I grant you can turn out better stuff—but not at a price those fellows will look at. Milano—Itala—all the big foreign makers—pay ten dollars a week where we'd have to pay fifty or a hundred. They get their supers for fifty cents a day—and we're lucky to get bum extras for three dollars. Everything's in proportion."

"You admit we can make better film——"

"Forget it; it doesn't make any difference. I've used that argument myself when I was fighting to spend five thousand on a picture that could be skimped through for five hundred. And the answer's the same one I always got—it's price that the exhibitor considers, not quality. He's got to. He's got a theater that holds just so many people. He knows the maximum receipts for any week, and after he's been in business long enough he knows what average deduction to make for weather and other things that affect his attendance.

"And he knows—the exhibitor—what his expenses are, too. He can't allow for any deduction there, either, you bet. His rent and his pay roll and his lighting bills go on just the same, whether he plays to capacity or to empty seats. He's got to make film rental a fixed charge, too. That's why he's glad to take a program from his local exchange. He *can't* pay more just because you offer him an extra good film. The public won't stand for his raising his prices. Listen—I'm talking against myself when I shoot all this dope at you. I'd like nothing better than to take a crack, just once, at making a picture without any limit to speak of.

"Gad—I'd like to see how a few ideas of mine would work out! And if there wasn't so much money, I'd have fun beating a skinny bank roll, too—showing you and myself and a few of the dubs that think it's clever to roast me what I can do. I'd put a few things over. But I won't let you go up against a game that's dead sure to beat you. You'd do better to give Dave Steinman's faro game a play some night. You'd get quicker action—the suspense wouldn't be so bad for you, and you might have a chance to win, if Dave's dealer had an off night."

"Yes—I guess you've covered the ground," said Lansing, nodding. "That's about what every one who's described conditions in the film game has told me. Only—they seem to forget that just because things have been done a certain way isn't any reason for doing them that same way forever."

"You said something like that before—and it sounded all right. But I was half doped then. And since I got away I've been thinking it over. You can't beat this exchange game in any——"

"Yes, you can—and through the State's rights men, in spite of what you say. Now I'll explain. We're going to turn out the best film we can, with the resources we've got. It won't be as good a film as we'd like, and as we'd get if we didn't have to watch expenses. But it'll be a better film than the public's ever been asked to look at in this country. And that's just what we're going to do—we're going to ask the public to look at it, the way it's asked to go to see Belasco's newest play, or the latest musical show.

"The way things are now people just go to the movies. They're beginning to get to want some particular actor or actress—only just beginning. Generally speaking, though, they don't know what they're going to see. They pay their nickel or their dime, and they find a seat and hope it'll be a good program. What sort of way is that to run a great amusement business? How long would the theaters keep open if they just hung out a sign and told

people to pay their money and take a chance on seeing something good? Isn't that the way it is in the movies now? All John Smith knows, when he takes his best girl to the pictures, is that they'll see about six or seven reels—a couple of two-reel features, a one-reel comedy with a chase in it, maybe another one-reeler, and perhaps a topical weekly."

"All that's true—but what are you going to do about it?"

"Go to the public! Tell it we've produced a certain film. Put it on in a regular theater here in New York—on Broadway. Charge real money while it's there. Advertise it—a particular film, specially written, specially produced, specially cast. Tell 'em before they go what they're going to see. Get the same sort of national publicity for it that a first-class play gets, so that people in the smaller theaters and the smaller towns will be waiting for it. Don't you see? The State's rights men will have to have that film. It'll draw capacity audiences—and they'll be willing to pay extra prices because they know they'll see an extra good show. Now do you see?"

"It might—yes, it just might get over," said Martyn slowly, reluctantly. "It's a way of getting around the way the game's being run now. But can you put it over? There's all sorts of things to be taken into account——"

"You do your part—give me the best film we can get for what we can afford to put into it. I'll guarantee to put my share over. It's a gamble—and if you can show me anything in the amusement business, from a penny peep show to a fifty-thousand-dollar musical extravaganza that isn't, I'll eat it. It's up to you, Cliff. Are you willing to put in your brains and your knowledge of how to make a picture, and your time—against what money I've got and my part of the work?"

"Oh, me!" Martyn dismissed the idea that he had anything to risk with a gesture of contempt. "I haven't been worrying about myself, Lansing. All I've ever needed to make me willing to jump in with both feet is to know that you've got some sort of a chance to come out ahead. And—I guess you've got that chance—about one in a hundred."

"That's enough," said Lansing, with decision. "If you can see the chance, too, even if it doesn't look any bigger than that, it's a cinch it's there. That shows I'm not absolutely crazy. Now, then—how about doing 'Crandall's Revenge' for our first feature—with Ralph Morgan as star?"

Martyn threw back his head and thought for a minute.

"Good enough, I guess," he said after a minute. "I see what you're figuring on—that people will remember the play just well enough to want to see it again. It was dramatized from a novel, wasn't it?"

"One reason I picked it. In the play some of the best stuff in the book couldn't be acted out—it had to be brought in as exposition—the characters just told one another that this and that had happened. In a film we can act it all out, and more, too, if we need it."

"Right!" said Martyn. "I used to hammer at them all the time to buy the rights to good magazine stories for me to make into scenarios—and now they're beginning to do it. That's where the best films are coming from in the future—because those chaps know how to write stories. But about Morgan—I don't believe you've got a chance to get him. He'd want the key to the subtreasury."

"He hasn't had a success for five years—not a real one. He was in five different plays last year—and not one of them ran more than two weeks. He worked a lot, but it was at rehearsal, and actors don't get paid for rehearsals.

I've got a hunch I can land him easily —but I wouldn't go near him till I'd got your O. K."

"All right—go ahead. He'll do, if you can get him. He's got the right sort of face, and I can wise him up on working for the camera. I'll read the book this afternoon and dope out the rest of the cast. With a star like that we can get cheap people for the other parts, and I know plenty of good ones that will do better work than this crowd that's beginning to think it's worth real money. I'll get Jim Blunt for the camera and Teddy Lathrop to help me and attend to props."

"All that's up to you," said Lansing. "I'm not butting in on your end of the game, Cliff. But the more people you can get who'll take small money now and take a chance on going up with us when we've made good——"

"I get you. Leave that to me. I know a few people who'd rather work with me for enough to live on than get big money where they are. You go on and get Morgan, if you can, and are awfully sure you've got all the rights to the piece. You don't want to be held up with any copyright-infringement stuff after you get going. And remember that a play's worse than a bit of land when it comes to a clear title. I've known plays that twenty or thirty people had an interest in."

They separated, each with his work cut out for him. So far, Lansing felt, he had done well—almost too well. He hadn't expected Martyn to acquiesce so easily and so fully in all his suggestions. But he guessed that Martyn's temperament was only sleeping, not dead; that it had been lulled by his month in the woods. It was pretty sure to break out later under the strain of getting the picture ready. Moreover, it would be in touch with another artistic temperament then, if Lansing had any luck—that of Ralph Morgan.

It was easy to reach Morgan. In the old days the stage had been Lansing's chief passion, and a few minutes of telephoning put him in touch with a friend at The Lambs who promised to produce the star in the Knickerbocker bar within fifteen minutes—and kept his word. He introduced Lansing, and vanished discreetly.

Morgan was "at liberty." Or "resting." Either phrase is technically correct, and either, being translated, means that the great actor was looking for a job. But, for a star, this is not a simple process. The theatrical world rests very largely on foundations of pretense. He—or she—who has once been a star may touch the borders of starvation afterward, but must never admit it. The star, needing an engagement, cannot ask for it. He must wait to be approached by some manager. Nor can he accept a lesser part to tide over a bad spell. It must be stardom or nothing. So there are stars, unluckily cast, as Morgan had so often been since his one great success, who could write instructive articles on how to live in New York on a fraction of nothing a day.

If Morgan was in this class when Lansing met him, however, there was nothing in his aspect or his manner to show it. Solomon looked like a countryman after a misfit parlor has done with him beside him, and the lilies of the field would have blushed had they been obliged to stand comparison with him. His tailor, it may be guessed, considered him a good advertisement.

"I'm afraid I'm only wasting your time by asking you to meet me, Mr. Morgan," Lansing began. Here, he knew, was an occasion for diplomacy. "I suppose your plans for the next few weeks are already made?"

"Well—ah—they might be changed, you know," said Morgan. "I fancy a chappie can always make a turn if there's a bit of oof in sight—eh, what?"

"I've noticed it," said Lansing dryly. "Well—I'll be frank. I and my associates wondered if you could be induced to do some moving-picture work?"

"My word!" said the actor. "I say—that is a bit thick, old top—'pon my word, you have got a cheek! I mean to say—thinkin' I'd act on a bally screen! But I suppose the screw's fairish—eh, what? What'll you Americans be thinkin' of next, I wonder?"

"About five million of 'em will be thinking about Ralph Morgan if you agree to my proposition," said Lansing. "Look here—I think you're about the best actor of your type we've got. I mean that. I always did think so, in all the rotten plays they put you into after 'Crandall's Revenge.' But——"

"I say—they were a bit high now, weren't they?" interrupted the actor. "I'm fed up with your Yankee managers, and that's a fact."

"You've had bad luck. You made the hit of your life in 'Crandall's Revenge.' But that's being forgotten. Suppose you could get every one thinking again about how good you were in that? Suppose you could have another run in that? You'd be as popular as ever again, and the managers would all be after you, wouldn't they?"

"My word, yes! Rather! But they won't revive it, old chap. My word—I've asked them to a dozen times. They say it wouldn't do at all—and give a lot of silly reasons——"

Lansing rather prided himself on the way he reached that point. And now he fairly spread himself in the effort to make Morgan see what an elaborate film production of "Crandall's Revenge" would mean for him—the publicity, the renewed popularity.

"It would be better than a revival," he said enthusiastically. "A few weeks of easy work and it's all over. Making the whole picture won't take any longer than the rehearsals of a play—and then your part's all done."

"My word!" said Morgan. "You American chaps can talk—eh, what? But about the screw now—the oof—the bally coin, as you Americans say? Eh, what?"

Mr. Morgan talked, at times, like what he would have called a "silly ass, eh, what?" But in matters of money he proved himself singularly astute. He demanded, and got, a good deal more than Lansing had been willing to pay as a weekly salary. And he had a contingent interest in the profits of the film, too. One that promised to make him independent of managers for some time, if Lansing's venture made good. However, Lansing was well satisfied. He could afford to mortgage the future, and Morgan was one of the principal reasons he had for feeling that he had a future to mortgage.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GIRL OF THE BOAT.

Even after Morgan was snared a good deal of work remained to be done before Martyn could set the wheels finally in motion with his first cry of "Picture!" He and Lansing did forty-eight hours of practically continuous work on the manuscript—the working scenario, with relays of stenographers. With novel and play to work on many changes, many adaptations were still necessary. Lansing was rather appalled at the free way Martyn handled the material, but the director laughed at him.

"Doesn't make any difference how different it is," he said. "We stick to the main thread of narrative—and we give them the scenes they remember in the play. That's the point, it seems to me, though, of course, we're blazing a new trail here. A lot of people, of course, are coming to see

this film because they remember the play. We want to satisfy them. But —if *all* the people who saw the play came to see the film we'd lose money."

"How do you make that out? The play made three hundred thousand dollars."

"Yes—running about three years. Call it ninety weeks solid running. Suppose you allow fifteen thousand a week—and that's liberal. We've got to show to twice that many people to have a big winner, because we'll have at least twelve performances a week, and more likely twenty-one. No—we've got to figure on the people who didn't see the show—who only just heard about it. A lot of them will be movie fans—and we've got to please them. We've got to build this picture up for the people who've never seen the play. We're dealing with a new generation. All we've really got to worry about is getting out a good film. That's why I'm making all these changes."

There were changes of other sorts, too, for Martyn was figuring on expense in every scene. As he went along he was making notes of the settings, jotting down ideas for exteriors. Scene after scene reminded him of some spot he knew.

"You're like a Baedeker guide," said Lansing. "Only you must have gone around New York looking at every place you saw as a possible setting in a picture."

"Sure," admitted Martyn. "That's my business. I'm like the man who sat down and cried the first time he saw Niagara. When they asked him why he said he was thinking about all the power that was going to waste, and he didn't begin to cheer up and enjoy the sight till they told him that power was being used."

Lansing had to laugh at the way Martyn schemed to save a single setting.

"It all counts," said the director. "It isn't just what it costs us to build the scenes, either. It's the time. That's where doubling up on exteriors counts. The salaries you pay go right into the expense record, you know, and I guess I've doped out ways of cutting the time of this production down by a week or ten days already—supposing we get some decent weather. You can make a scene look entirely different by changing the set-up—moving the camera. I don't say a good director, used to doing the same thing himself, wouldn't catch on. But not the public. And what they don't know won't hurt 'em."

"You're tarred with the same brush as Hazzard and the rest of them," said Lansing. "Anything goes if you can get away with it. That's the motto of this whole business nowadays, it seems to me."

"Well, it's got to be our motto on this film," said Martyn. "Oh, you needn't worry! Give me some velvet to work on for the next production and I'll spend money so fast you won't be able to see it go. Say—I jewed Chambers down to forty-five. And he's been getting seventy-five from Western Film. If he hadn't had a row with Haines we couldn't have touched him. But Roche threw me down hard. There's a little girl that's going to wind up with real money. She wouldn't look at less than a hundred and a quarter, and I wouldn't sign her for that."

"For the lead, eh? I don't know, Cliff—I suppose we'll have to spend pretty nearly that, won't we?"

"Not if I can help it. I've got another iron or two in the fire. And I can get Roche at that figure any time I want her. She'd like to work with us, I guess. Trouble is, it's hard to get a woman lead with the right sort of face and enough experience for this sort of part. They've been going crazy with their long-haired, soulful-eyed

matinée idols lately. About seventy-five per cent of the films you see released now are playing up somebody like Warren Kerrigan or Frank Bushman."

Lansing had been waiting for just such an opportunity as this. Very casually now he made his first suggestion regarding the cast.

"Say—I used to know a girl who might do," he said. "I worked with her when I was learning the ropes. She looked then as if she might be pretty good when she got some experience. But she's never played leads."

"That wouldn't matter," said Martyn. "I'd just as soon have a woman that didn't know it all. If she had the stuff I could bring it out. Who is this dame?"

"I'll try to find her and bring her around," said Lansing. "Of course, it's up to you."

"Of course," said Martyn seriously.

Lansing grinned. And he didn't blame Martyn, either. Yet from the beginning of this enterprise he had intended that Mary Brewster, the girl he had first seen on the ferry, crossing to Fort Lee, should play opposite to Morgan. He had never forgotten the impression she had made on him on that first day, when her intuition for the right effect had distinguished her so absolutely from the automatons who were obeying the orders that Haines flung at them.

He had seen a good many moving-picture actresses since then. He had seen good ones and bad ones, and many who touched all the notes that lay between those extremes. He had seen prettier ones than this girl—but he had seen none who were able to blur at all the sharp, distinct impression she had made upon him. He had taken the trouble to follow up the film in which he had made his first appearance before the camera, and had seen it two or three times in different theaters. And the effect of her quick, carefully calculated bit of business had been as sharp, as vivid on the screen as in the studio. Moreover, it had won its tribute of a quick catching of the breath from those who sat near him.

It had always surprised him that this girl had not been recognized—that no director had seen her possibilities, and done his part in making her famous. But he wasn't disposed to quarrel with his luck. From the beginning he had hoped that some stroke of fortune would delay her success until he could have a hand in it. Selfish? Of course! Lansing was pretty human. Nothing that has been told about him has been set down with any idea of making him appear to be what he was not. He had most of the ordinary merits and defects of mankind. And he had a consuming ambition, to which everything had to be subordinated.

So he was glad, as he set out to find Mary Brewster, that her name hadn't become a sort of household word. He expected her to be a big factor in that process of realizing his ambition to which he had already consecrated Ralph Morgan and Cliff Martyn. He wanted, very passionately now, to make good. Lansing's had gone down again; the great store that his father had built up was closed, and this time definitely. The reorganization had kept it alive for only a few months. And he had heard echoes of talk that connected him with the failure. He wasn't blamed for it, but there was talk—a sort of intimation that he was like the sons of many other successful fathers. It wasn't only for the sake of having as much money as he had had before that he wanted to succeed, of course. Though, as a matter of fact, if this enterprise with "Crandall's Revenge" did fail, he was going to be poor in good earnest. Failure would mean the

need of getting a job and a salary just to live upon.

He supposed that finding Mary Brewster would be a simple matter. But it wasn't. He took a taxicab to the address he had kept ever since that first day at the Western studio, forgetting, if he had ever known, the impermanence of such New York addresses. She wasn't there, and there was no one in the building who had ever heard of her. This was the first small check he had encountered since he had taken Cliff Martyn to the Turkish bath, and it annoyed him out of all proportion to its importance. Then he called up Haines, at Fort Lee—and found that he knew nothing about the girl and cared less.

"I had to can her six months ago," said Haines. "She couldn't get along with Miss Trainor. Got to thinking she owned the studio, I guess."

So he had to institute a regular search. This was unfortunate, for it seemed that he was the only man in the industry who thought of Mary Brewster as a real actress, and there were some suggestive glances that made him pretty angry when he made his inquiries. He couldn't explain himself and his quest; on Martyn's advice, reenforced by his own common sense, he had kept his intentions quiet. Hazzard had been angry at his desertion; Cramer and Howell, and the big interests behind them, blamed him because Hazzard had twice escaped the traps they had set for him through his, Lansing's, intervention. They were likely, he knew, to do all they could to beat him, once they knew what he was doing.

Here and there, in the course of three days of visits to the studios about New York, in Flatbush, over on the Palisades, in Yonkers, and the Westchester hills, Lansing heard of the girl. Always she had been around, looking for work. But he couldn't catch up with her, and the trail, anyhow, seemed to be about three weeks old. And then, one morning, when he had been to Coytesville, and was returning, just before noon, he met her in Manhattan Street. She was thin and very pale, and she was hurrying, as best she could, to catch the boat. He stopped her, and swore to himself at the hunted look that sprang into her eyes as she turned to face him.

"Miss Brewster!" he said. "I've been looking for you all over the place."

She remembered him in a moment.

"I haven't—I haven't been very well," she said. "I was going over early this morning to try to find something to do, but I had to lie down again."

Certainly she didn't look well. She looked shabby, too, which was worse, almost, so far as her chances of getting work went.

"Well—you've found something to do, all right!" he said happily. "I'm it! Look here—let's get into a taxi and run down to some place near here for lunch. Then we can come to terms. I'm not going to let you out of my sight, now that I've found you!"

He got her into a cab while she was hesitating. And, in the restaurant, he found out part of what was the matter with her. The girl was hungry. She tried to save her face with some remark about not having felt well enough to eat breakfast, but Lansing's intuitions had become sharper, and he knew.

"Look here!" he said, after she had eaten, and when the food and the rich, hot coffee had had some effect. "I'm going to throw my cards down on the table for you."

He told her a good deal of his story, and she stared at him, wide-eyed, while she listened.

"Well?" he said finally.

"Oh—I think you're going to win!"

she said. "I don't see why you shouldn't! I always wondered why you were working as an extra—because you didn't look at all as if you needed to. Most of the men who do that—well, you know!" She shrugged her shoulders to dispose of them. "But—where do I come in? Are you going to give me a little part, or some work as an extra? I—I suppose I haven't any shame any more! I need it dreadfully!"

"No—that's not what I want you for," he said. "I've got an idea that you and I can help to make one another's fortunes, Miss Brewster! I think you might be, in six months, the best known woman in the movies. But it's all up to Martyn. I've told you about him—what sort of a crank he is. If you went to him right now he wouldn't look at you twice. You know—I don't mean to be unkind——"

Her face was crimson, but she nodded pluckily.

"I know," she said. "I look—oh, dreadful——"

"We'll make old Cliff the victim of a little conspiracy," he said cheerfully. "You're going to take this money and buy some pretty clothes. And you're going to dine with me to-night in some awfully swell place, where we'll feel like bloated millionaires just because they let us in. And in the morning you're going to put on the very nicest of all your new things, and you're coming down to the office with a hangover of that millionaire feeling and let Cliff persuade you to play the lead in 'Crandall's Revenge'! Aren't you?"

"I—I oughtn't to, but I'll do whatever you say," she said weakly. And then, suddenly, she flamed up. "I don't care!" she cried. "I think you're right, Mr. Lansing! I believe I am a good actress!"

"Now I know it's going to be all right!" he said triumphantly.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE APOLLO.

The conspiracy was a great success. Mary Brewster managed to surprise even Lansing, such wonders had she worked with the money he had supplied. She had refused to take all he offered, but it was obvious that she had had enough. Martyn talked with her for five minutes, making little thumbnail sketches of her, full face and profile. He dropped a book, seemingly by accident, and got the quick reflex action of her features. He tried a dozen other tricks with which Lansing, by this time, was familiar, tricks that aroused varying emotions in the girl, and so served to show the mobility of her features. And then he engaged her for the lead.

Picking the rest of the company was easy. Martyn, indeed, had practically cast the picture, except for the three or four really important parts, as he read the novel and made his preliminary schedule of the scenes. He made no attempt to get well-known people; he shared Lansing's belief that most of them were simply automatons, the limit of whose ability was reached when they did exactly as a director told them. Moreover, those whose reputations hadn't yet been made were cheaper. Even so, the weekly pay roll was enough to make a capitalist with as meagre a qualification as Lansing's for the rôle gasp. But he didn't wince. Too much economy, he knew, would be as dangerous as the most wanton extravagance.

"Well!" said Martyn, at last, "I'm ready to start! I've fussed around, and I've been slow—but I've worked that way on purpose. We don't want a lot of things turning up to hold us back after we do start, because the pay roll starts when we do. So I've tried to anticipate everything. I can't see any reason now why we shouldn't make a sprint out of this. Six weeks I'm al-

lowing for the making of the picture, and you can go ahead with your plans for handling it on that basis. Allow another ten days, say, for cutting and piecing, and for putting in titles and inserts. We may save some time, but that ought to be an outside limit, barring accidents."

"It's up to us to bar the accidents, all right," said Lansing soberly. "The longer I stay in this game, Cliff, the more it's brought home to me that the chap who said time was money had the right dope. Time's money with us, all right, and we can figure it out to about six places of decimals, too, if you're interested."

"Don't do it on my account," said Cliff. "I haven't got any head for figures. But I've got the general idea, all right. We've got to finish her up while the bank roll still needs a rubber band to keep it together. All right. Just at present you see a fairly human being. To-morrow morning I'll have Simon Legree backed off the boards! By to-morrow night that whole crowd, from Morgan down, will be ready to slip rat poison into my coffee—but they'll be too scared to do it! And they'll work like blazes, just to get it over and done with!"

Lansing grinned. He allowed for a certain degree of exaggeration, but he knew that Martyn would have to hold a whip of some sort over the people who were to transform "Crandall's Revenge" from an idea to a five-reel feature photo play. Opinions might differ —they do, in fact—as to the degree of art in moving pictures. But he knew that even a grand-opera company couldn't teach very much about the artistic temperament to the inmates of the average studio during the making of a picture. The work is done, nearly always, at high speed, and under a terrific strain. Nerves get tight; tempers are always near the vanishing point. Regarding Ralph Morgan, Lansing hoped for the best.

After he had seen Martyn at work Lansing's hopes waxed very high. Never before had he seen Martyn directing a picture. Martyn wanted no outsiders in the studio while he was working, and it had happened that Lansing, when he was working as an extra man, had never found work with him. It was Martyn's reputation among film men, and the pictures of his making that he had seen, that had led him to choose him.

"Crandall's Revenge" began very quietly. On the first day there were no extras present at all, though Lansing knew that they had already been selected, and knew just when to report. The principals, when he got to the studio, were grouped in what the movie world knows, technically, as an "interior, parlor, wealthy." And Martyn, walking up and down and gesturing freely, was telling them the story of the play. He told it very well, describing the various climaxes that would be made in the film, and his reasons for various changes and alterations of the original novel and play.

Then he took up the character in detail. In terse, picturesque sentences, he described the people who were going to move through the five thousand feet of film that would be the result of their work.

"Think of them as real people," he urged. "Then think of yourselves as having become those people. Get into these characters, so that you keep on acting your parts even when you're resting for lunch or waiting for your cue. Some of the best business, some of the best bits we'll have in this picture, you'll supply. If you imagine yourselves as really doing these things, really swayed by the emotions and ambitions of these imaginary people, you can't help giving little natural touches to your work that I'd never get. Maybe

some directors wouldn't admit this, but I know it's so. I've never made a picture yet in which my actors haven't been responsible for about half the good stuff I got credit for."

Lansing went out and shook hands with himself solemnly. He thought of Haines, who didn't even let his people know, when they acted a scene, what its relation might be with the one before it or the one after it. He went off about his own work with a light heart. He felt that he could trust Martyn absolutely. Since he had returned from Maine he hadn't shown a single symptom of wanting a drink, and Lansing was ready to believe that his drinking had been due less to a craving for liquor than to a general and easily accounted for depression, that had made some sort of stimulant a necessity. He had heard of such cases before, cases in which hard, important work, with something vital at stake, had furnished all the stimulant necessary. Martyn had that sort of work now, and it looked as if he would be too busy even to think about his former resource.

And, meanwhile, Lansing's own work was cut out for him. Having no illusions about Cramer, Howell, and company, and not being too sure that Hazzard, too, wouldn't enjoy a chance to hurt him, he realized that he had a double problem. He had to keep his movements covered as long as he could —until all his arrangements were made. And then he had to get publicity for "Crandall's Revenge," and get it in large doses. Having given up deliberately the ordinary ways of reaching the public with his product, he had to organize his selling campaign, to put the thing in terms of commerce.

His theatrical experience made him a little wary of New York. It might be easier to launch the film on Broadway; it was almost sure to be easier to get a theater in the Mecca of amusements. But—failure in New York would probably mean complete, irredeemable disaster. Many and many a play, as he knew, had gone to the storehouse after a single disastrous week or two in New York, when, had it been shown first on the road, it might have made a good deal of money. The road, and cities like Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, will not accept a play that has failed in New York. But they do not demand the stamp of metropolitan approval; they will approve a play, if they like it, that has never been nearer Broadway than a try-out on the Atlantic City or New Haven dog.

Lansing wasn't sure that this precedent would hold good for a feature film like "Crandall's Revenge." As a matter of fact, of course, he had nothing to go by. The thing hadn't been done before, and he had to make his own precedents. But, on general principles, he decided to try for a theater in a smaller city first, knowing, as he did, that New York isn't half as ready to greet a new thing as it would like the rest of the country to believe—that it is the most hidebound, conservative old lady of a town in America, if only the truth were known. Not that he didn't entertain a considerable affection for his native city. He did. But he had no illusions about it, either.

There was another reason, too, for his decision to stake everything on a try-out in another city. It would be easier to keep his potential enemies in the dark. Cramer and Howell, he knew, were very close to the great powers in the theatrical world. It happened that there was a temporary truce between the two embattled theatrical groups at this time. That would keep him from playing one against the other, which might prove necessary.

So, through Hazen, to keep the thing covered, he began to negotiate for theaters in two or three available cities. Also, he arranged for the printing of the positive films from the negatives

that would come from the studio. He had no equipment for this, of course, but there were, by this time, various independent film companies that were glad to do the work, which held a comfortable profit. For various reasons, he split up the job, arranging to get a thousand feet from a plant in New York, another thousand in Philadelphia, and so on. This was important work. The long strips of film on which a photo play is taken are precious things, once they have been developed. And they are as fragile, as sensitive, as easily destroyed as they are precious. The task of printing the positive is a delicate one, intrusted to experts in the manipulation of the almost human machine that does the work, with its spitting spark flaming blue in the dark room, so many times a second, recording a minute photograph with each flash of electric flame, while the film moves on.

There were chances for Lansing to make mistakes, glorious blunders. But, in the main, his was routine work, and not to be compared to the task that lay in Martyn's hands. What he had most need of was patience—which is the most useful possession of any man who is trying to do something unsanctioned by successful precedent.

Barring the possibility, and he considered it a remote one, of interference by some hostile interest, Lansing hadn't anticipated any real difficulty in getting a theater, wherever he chose to look for it. His plan was to open just at the end of the regular theatrical season, when road companies are ending their tours, and no new productions, except a few musical comedies, are being made. By so doing, he reasoned, he would find many theaters dark, closed for the summer. Rent goes on, whether a theater is closed or open. So do a good many other overhead charges.

"Let me put in my film—on the regular sharing basis," was his proposition. "All you're gambling is the trifling cost of keeping the box office open and providing ushers and lights."

It seemed to him the sort of proposition that any alert manager would jump at—a chance to make money in what had always been a losing period of the year. But he encountered objections on all sides. They simmered down, the objections, to one principal stumblingblock.

"I've got a first-class theater," said one manager after another. "I play two-dollar attractions thirty weeks a year. People know that I only book the best plays." (This wasn't true, in nine cases out of ten; what that manager, and pretty nearly every other manager, did was to take what the central powers in New York sent him!) "I can't afford to lower the tone of my house by letting in a moving-picture show. I can't have my house classed with the ten-cent movie theater around the corner. And I'd be a sucker to boost this movie game, anyhow. It's beginning to cut in on our profits. We're not selling half the gallery seats we were before all these cheap picture houses started up!"

Lansing had arguments to overcome every objection. But they weren't strong enough to conquer the managers —men who, as a class, are at once bolder and more timid than any other body of adventurers under the sun. It was pure luck, not skill, as he was fully ready to admit, that got him his theater at last. Hazen heard of the owner of a fair-sized theater in a city within fairly easy reach of New York who was in serious financial difficulties. It wasn't the sort of theater Lansing had hoped for, but it would do, at a pinch. He went to its owner, armed with his knowledge of the man's difficulties, and this time he got action.

"A year ago I'd have turned you down flat," said Roth. "But some one's been putting you wise to the hole I'm

in. If your film goes over I might get going again. You can have the Apollo—but you got to give me five hundred dollars advance for an option. Then I'll give you the option—good for four weeks from date. I got to protect myself, see? There was a sucker talking about a summer-stock season——"

Lansing ventured to doubt it. But he wrote his check. It was the Apollo or an attempt to get a New York theater, and he fought shy of that alternative.

"You can thank the crooked politicians in this town for your chance to get the Apollo!" said Roth bitterly. "Just because I wouldn't pay the graft they were after they swore they'd get me—and I'm here to say they came near doing it!"

Lansing knew that story. It was a sordid and not unfamiliar tale. Roth, enjoying the easily purchased favors of certain city officials, had quietly defied most of the building ordinances for years. New politicians, acquiring power, had undertaken an upward revision of the scale of prices for protection. Roth had refused to pay. Each side had been bluffing. The grafters had gone a little too far in giving publicity to the violations of the law at the Apollo, and had to make their bluff good. Though Roth yielded, in frantic haste, and agreed to pay the new scale, public opinion had demanded the alterations that were necessary to make the Apollo safe. The result had been a theater closed for ten or twelve of the best weeks of the season, canceled bookings, and the loss of enough money, when it was added to ruinously expensive changes in the theater, to put Roth in a bad hole. The plain truth was that Roth couldn't carry the house until the opening of the new season unless something turned up.

So he and Lansing were both satisfied. But Lansing's satisfaction was tempered by a telegram that reached him at his hotel when he went back to pack his bag for his return to New York.

"Come at once," it read. "Your presence imperative."

It was signed by Mary Brewster. He did not enjoy his ride to New York. He knew, somehow, that this girl he had discovered was not the sort to be frightened without cause.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST BLOW.

His train was delayed, and he didn't reach the city until too late for a visit to the studio—so-called by courtesy. He called Martyn on the telephone and left word for the director to call him up. And then, to his annoyance, he found that he didn't have Mary Brewster's address. He waited, with as much patience as he could muster, for Martyn to call him up. But no call came. Still, he was not really uneasy because of that. Martyn might not have got his message—in fact, renewed telephoning to his boarding house proved that he hadn't. Any number of things might have kept him from going home.

But it was annoying, to put it mildly, to have to wait until morning to discover the reason for the telegram, and it meant a night in which sleep played a small and inconsequential part. Most of the hours of darkness were passed in intricate calculations. Expenses were mounting; unforeseen items were coming up with a regularity that was not less depressing because he had foreseen something of the sort, and had tried to leave a safe margin.

Still, unless something really serious had gone wrong at the studio, Lansing felt that they ought to pull through. He had his theater now, and that had for several days been his chief source of anxiety. Now it was a comparatively simple question of finishing the

film on the expenditure that his diminishing bank roll made possible. He was tempted, more than once, to remember his friendship with Sandy Brangwyn, who would advance any sum he might need. But he crushed that thought down remorselessly. He was willing to gamble with his own money, but not with Brangwyn's. And he knew that if Brangwyn put up money it would be out of friendship, and not at all because of any expectation of profit. And that was just what Lansing couldn't allow.

He woke up late, to his annoyance, having gone to sleep finally as dawn was breaking. He was irritable already, and the discovery, made by telephone, that Martyn hadn't been home at all during the night increased his irritability. He hit the Fort Lee trail a little late, and crossed, this time, with the aristocrats of the movies, who didn't have to be on hand for the very early work. There were half a dozen famous stars, and several of them nodded to him. He knew about every one on the boat who was bound for the studios, as a matter of fact. His diligent haunting of the Screen Club had increased his acquaintance remarkably, and his brief connection with Hazzard had rather marked him.

By this time, too, every one in the game knew something about the picture Martyn was making. Too many people were engaged in it for it to be kept a secret. No one knew Lansing's plans—he had told those only to the very few whose coöperation was indispensable. And so, though his connection with the making of "Crandall's Revenge" was known, he had been able to cover such activities as his deal with Roth. Most of the wise players of the movie game thought the whole enterprise of "Crandall's Revenge" a colossal joke. They guessed that Lansing and Martyn intended to dispose of it through the State's rights men, and, knowing something of how much the picture was costing, amused themselves by speculating as to how much money its backers would lose.

But they liked Lansing, and he made up some of his lost time by accepting one star's invitation to go up the hill in his automobile.

"I should think you'd have a boat of your own," said the star, with the frank disregard for money of one who had, less than two years before, been working in vaudeville for forty dollars a week.

"Can't afford it," said Lansing, cheerfully truthful, and knowing that to tell the truth was the best way to practice deceit in any branch of the amusement business.

"Ha-ha!" laughed the star. "That's a good one!"

Lansing knew that he was supposed to be much better off than he was. He encouraged this belief, not because of any false pride, but because he hoped that Cramer and Howell would share it. If they did, they might be a little more careful, if they tried to spoil the success of "Crandall's Revenge." Their ignorance of the facts, both as to his finances and his plans, was one of Lansing's best assets. He hoped that they were counting on his comparative inexperience; that they thought, as Martyn had done in the beginning, that he was trying to follow a road that the failures of other men had already proved to be a blind alley.

"Here you are!" said the star, at last. "I'll drop you—if I don't get to the shop pretty soon old Haines will have a fit!"

"Fine—much obliged!" said Lansing. "When my ship comes home I'll return the compliment!"

He had only a short distance to walk. The studio was a makeshift affair, built up around the nucleus of an abandoned barn. And he was surprised to see two or three of the principals sunning them-

selves outside as he walked up to the office. Inside, Lathrop, Martyn's assistant and props as well, was going over a list of small items that had lent verisimilitude to a scene in an English country house, and must now be returned to the theatrical warehouse from which they had been hired. He nodded to Lansing and bent over his work again.

Lansing went on into the studio, which should have been a scene of bustling activity. It wasn't. Morgan, looking supremely bored, was reading a London newspaper. Others of the cast stood and sat around. But of Martyn there was no sign. Mary Brewster came to him with a rush.

"Oh—I'm so glad you're here!" she said. "It's happened—what I was afraid of when I wired! Mr. Martyn isn't here."

"So I see!" said Lansing. "What made you think he wouldn't be?"

"He was very peculiar yesterday," she said. "Especially after we stopped for lunch. Usually, you know, he grudges us ten minutes. But yesterday we were all back and waiting for half an hour before he came. And afterward we couldn't do anything to please him. He and Mr. Morgan had the most dreadful row! I was out of the picture for nearly an hour, while they made the club scene, and I slipped down to Hovey's and telephoned that telegram to you. I'd happened to hear Mr. Martyn say where you were going to be. And—that's not all——"

"It's pretty nearly enough," said Lansing grimly. "Go ahead!"

"Mr. Martyn let us off early. He said we were all working like dogs, and he was tired of it. And he went off in a big touring car with Ed Rackett, of the Iris studio!"

"The dickens!" said Lansing. He knew Rackett; every one did know the big Iris director, who had a reputation from California to Florida as a "good fellow." He and Martyn, as Lansing also knew, had been great friends once. And—Cramer was supposed, since his break with Hazzard, to be one of the principal backers of the Iris Film Corporation! It didn't require the methods of Sherlock Holmes to lead Lansing to the deduction that his enemies had struck their first blow.

"All right!" said Lansing. "Good for you, Miss Brewster! I'll take hold right away."

He went back to Lathrop.

"Where's Martyn?" he asked.

"I don't know!" said Lathrop. He lifted sullen eyes to meet Lansing's frank gaze.

"Yes, you do," said Lansing. "He's gone off on a toot, and you know it as well as I do. Look here, Lathrop—I suppose you figure that Martyn hired you, and you owe him your loyalty, and all that sort of thing. I don't know how much he's told you about this deal we're putting through. But I'll tell you now, if he hasn't, that it's big, and that we're working against time to get it finished. And—you're taking my pay."

"I don't know where he's gone," said Lathrop, still sullen. "If you think I'm taking your money without working for you I'll quit——"

"Forget it!" said Lansing. "Cliff's going to be just as sore at himself when he comes to as I am. He's got as much at stake as I have, too. What I want you to do is to go on in there and get those people to work. You can make a few scenes. Maybe he'll throw them out when he comes back, but the thing is to keep them working. It'll be demoralizing if they hang around and wait for him. And—if you know where to find Martyn, you'd better get word to him that I'm after him!"

Lathrop got up.

"I'll put them to work, all right," he said. "But we'll just waste the film. He'll never stand for any one's butting in on his work."

"All right—waste it, then. Anyhow, get busy. And call me up to-night at nine o'clock. I may need you. Here's my number."

He went down the hill then, and had recourse first to the telephone in Hovey's, the general store that had acquired a new lease of life and general prosperity since the movies had come. As he expected, the Iris studio reported that Rackett was "away." Out of town, it was believed. Then, systematically, Lansing called up every one of the places Martyn had been wont to favor. In none of them had he been seen. He called Mary Brewster, on top of the hill, and asked what he had forgotten before—a description of the car in which Rackett and Martyn had left the studio. Here he struck his first bit of luck. Rackett, like most of the people connected in any way with the amusement business, thought of publicity as he did of food and drink. The car was a quiet, tastefully decorated affair, bright yellow, with touches of salmon pink. Mary Brewster thought there was, probably, only one such car in the world.

Armed with that piece of information, Lansing took up the trail. He telephoned to a Hoboken garage, that was sometimes called upon to supply cars for pictures, and hired the services of a chauffeur and a high-speed runabout. He stipulated that the chauffeur should have an intimate acquaintance with the road houses of northern New Jersey. When the car arrived the driver bent a judicial eye upon him.

"All alone?" he said. "I rather guessed you'd have company, and I brought a three-seater."

"That's all right," said Lansing, weighing him. "What's your name, and do you like twenty-dollar bills?"

"My name's Steve, and I eat 'em," said the driver.

"If we're pinched I'll put up bail, or pay double wages while you're in jail," said Lansing. "There's no exact telling what we may have to do."

"Sure—sure not!" said Steve sympathetically. "I ain't got no use for these people that's always planning things out ahead. I'd rather not rob a bank, and if it's murder I'd like to select the corpse. But anything else I'll——"

"Only what they might call atrocious assault, here in Jersey, and a little kidnaping on the side, perhaps," said Lansing. "Now listen. Suppose you'd started from about here yesterday afternoon in a yellow car with salmon-pink trimmings—where would you be most likely to be now?"

"Was I thirsty when I started?"

"You were—and then some!"

"Well," said Steve, throwing in the clutch, "I might be one place, and then again I might be another! Let's go see. I'm beginning to make you, boss."

On the whole, Lansing felt, he had been lucky in his chauffeur. Steve had the air of one who was in the habit of starting what he finished. And he did not seem to be overburdened with scruples. They started for the open country, where road houses lend a certain distinction to the rather flat rural portions of the State of New Jersey.

The way was long, and it was dusty. And yet it seemed that Ed Rackett had maintained a considerable discretion. They traveled many miles before their inquiries bore fruit. And then, not very far from Trenton, they came to a wayside inn that remembered the yellow car hopefully. Hopefully, because its occupants had promised to return on the homeward trip.

"Very lively gentlemen, they were, sir," said the host. "They said they were going to cross the Delaware on the ice, like Washington, and hoped they wouldn't have to wait too long for it to freeze."

After that the trail grew warmer. Two road houses out of three, at least,

fulfilled the function of blazed trees in a woods path. The way led them down into a country where the salt air from the sea mingled in their nostrils with the vigorous breath of the pines.

"I've got their number now," said Steve, in a place called Hammonton. He spoke with intense satisfaction. "They'll be in Atlantic City. That's where I guessed, but we had to make sure."

"Too bad," said Lansing. "If we have to do business on the board walk I'm afraid we may attract too much attention. But——"

"We'll invite 'em to some nice, private spot," suggested Steve.

They found the yellow car, minus one lamp, and somewhat bruised as to its mud guards, in a garage. And later they learned that even Atlantic City, which is indifferent to most celebrations that involve alcohol, was disposed to sit up and take notice of Rackett and Martyn. Even so, it took some time to find them. But Lansing and Martyn came face to face at last, near the Inlet. Rackett was there, too, but he was not alert. It was easy for Steve to persuade him that they were old and bosom friends, the while that Lansing led Martyn down from the board walk to the beach.

CHAPTER XV.

HEROIC TREATMENT.

Martyn remembered Lansing very well indeed, it seemed—only not as Lansing. In five minutes, down on the beach, with the surf pounding in his ears, Lansing heard himself hailed as Christopher Columbus, as Thomas A. Edison, and as Johnny Evers, of the Boston Braves, all, it seemed, intimate friends of Martyn. If the thing hadn't been so serious, so infuriating because of the possibilities of disaster involved, it would have been wildly funny. But Lansing didn't find it at all hard to overcome what little inclination to laughter Martyn's condition aroused in him. Disgust very soon overcame every other emotion. And disgust brought with it the desire for action. The case was one that called for heroic treatment, and it received just that.

Salt water, plentifully applied, worked wonders. Taking the chance of being seen from the almost deserted board walk, Lansing took his victim down to the water's edge, first relieving him of coat and shirt, and held him forcibly in a place where the big waves, rolling in, must break on him. At the first shock of the cold water Martyn almost got away. But Lansing was too much for him, and he had to take his medicine. Each wave added to the effect; ten minutes, in which they were both soaked, did the work. Martyn was still far from being his normal self, but he had traveled a long way on the road back to consciousness and understanding, and he recognized Lansing.

"I don't know how this started!" he said. "Say—I'm sorry——"

"You're not half as sorry as you're going to be," Lansing told him grimly. "And I know how it started, too. You didn't have the backbone to refuse to take a drink. Lord—I thought I could trust you!"

He said a good deal more, and it was an indication of Martyn's chastened mood that he did not resent anything. Martyn was humble, and he was contrite. And he didn't say a word when they got back to the board walk, and Lansing sent Martyn for the car.

"Bring it to the bottom of the ramp that leads down from the board walk here," he said. "And hustle."

Rackett was surveying them with a glazed, inquiring eye. He wanted to know if Lansing was Martyn's friend. Then he wanted to celebrate the reunion. And finally he went to sleep. Martyn thought they ought not to leave him.

"It wasn't his fault!" he said generously. "I just happened to be with him, Bob."

"I know. And you're going to happen to go home with me, the same way. Don't you know yet that he laid for you? He knew you better than I did—and so did the crowd who sent him to get you away from the picture! They knew you'd backslide the minute you saw a good chance."

Martyn was too tired to argue. And he was a good deal ashamed of himself, too. The salt water hadn't fully cleared his brain, because he had gone too far for any treatment to do that without a night's sleep to aid it. And he had no more than got into the car when he was snoring.

"This the kidnaping?" asked Steve. "Looks pretty easy!"

"It was—but I couldn't know he'd come so peaceably. Don't worry, though. We'll get action before we're through. It's only postponed, not called off."

It was pretty late, but nothing was farther from Lansing's thoughts than spending the night in the resort city. His one object was to get Martyn back to the studio in time to start work at the regular hour the next morning. Lansing's mouth was set in a hard, straight line, and there was a vicious glint in his eyes. He remembered the combined promise and threat he had made to Martyn, and he was awaiting the time for its fulfillment. Steve drove on, with a cheerful disregard for speed laws and his own fatigue, and Lansing waited. It was already a little light in the east when Martyn gave signs of life, and finally roused himself. He looked sheepishly at Lansing as memory came to him.

"Gee!" he said. "I guess I made an awful ass of myself! How did you find me? I'm glad you did!"

"Stop her!" said Lansing to Steve. He turned to Martyn. "Feeling pretty rotten?" he asked.

"I sure am!" said Martyn. "Never again!"

"That's what you said before," said Lansing. He took off his coat and slipped out of his seat. "Come on!" he said. "Remember what I told you would happen if you didn't stick to our agreement?"

"Oh, come on—I didn't mean to do it, and I'm sorry——"

"I keep *my* word!" said Lansing briefly. "Help him out, Steve. I'm going through with the atrocious assault now. I'm going to do a low-down, dirty thing. I'm going to hit a man when he's in no condition to give me a scrap!"

"Your funeral!" said Steve indifferently, lighting a cigarette.

"Say—I'll admit I'm not feeling right," said Martyn dangerously. "But if you think I can't fight——"

"I hope you can," said Lansing cheerfully. "I can lick you much worse if you can put up a halfway decent scrap."

And he proceeded, very thoroughly, but very dispassionately, to make good his threats. He wasn't angry any more. He understood almost as well as if he had seen the whole affair how Martyn had been tricked into this breach of their compact. And he knew, too, that Martyn was still very much under the influence of the liquor he had drunk. He had seen drinkers like Martyn before. He understood the peculiar psychology that had been at work.

Martyn had kept sober as long as he had for several reasons. One was his own desire to make good, another his self-respect. But, among the others, a certain awe of Lansing had been, in all probability, predominant. He hadn't consciously been afraid of Lansing; he might, when he was normal, have forgotten Lansing's threats. But subconsciously, the impression of them had

lingered. He had broken his word in a sort of defiance curiously like that of a child deliberately doing what it has been told not to do. Nervous strain, exhaustion, had induced the mood. And if Martyn went back to work, he would be under a more severe nervous strain than he had yet undergone; he would come even closer to exhaustion. Lansing felt that it was vitally important to reënforce that lurking fear that had helped to keep Martyn straight, so that, the next time the defiant mood came upon him, there might be something to offset it.

So there was nothing as petty as a desire to vent his anger in his determination to make good his threat. He was simply applying what he knew of psychology to the case. Which did not prevent him from doing the business in a manner that evoked Steve's warm approval and respectful admiration. It was a most scientific thrashing that Martyn had to take.

"And never a mark on his face for any one to see in the morning!" said Steve, when matters were settled.

"Exactly," said Lansing. "You'll feel better pretty soon, Martyn. Sorry —but it had to be done."

Martyn said nothing at all. But he was thinking pretty hard. On the ferry, as they crossed to Cortlandt Street, he turned to Lansing suddenly.

"I understand, I guess," he said. "If I go wild again the way I did before I started out with Ed Rackett I'll remember that scrap. I wish you'd been around! Morgan drove me crazy. Say —I think he's trying to make trouble. His contract's binding, isn't it?"

"As much so as any contract," said Lansing. "But I wouldn't worry about him, Cliff. Keep hold of yourself, and everything else will be all right."

"I've had my blow-out," said Martyn, flushing. "Lord—feel that wind, coming up off the bay!"

Lansing gave Steve Martyn's address. When they came to the boarding house he had a new idea.

"Go in and pack some fresh clothes in a bag, Cliff," he said. "Then we'll run up to my joint. You can have a cold shower there, and I guess we can all do with some breakfast. I'll cook that myself."

It was so ordered, except that Steve insisted on doing the cooking. And while he filled the little apartment with the savory smell of frying bacon and hot coffee Lansing made Martyn lie down, and pounded and rubbed and kneaded until his skin glowed pink, and the muscles were smooth and resilient.

"Now the shower—cold, as it runs!" he said. "Then you'll feel like a new man."

Over his second cup of coffee, he yawned luxuriously and looked at his watch.

"The way of the transgressor is hard, Cliff," he said. "Time for you to be off. Take him over to Fort Lee, Steve, and drop him at the studio."

Martyn stared at him.

"Aren't you coming?" he asked, astonished.

"I? Lord, no! I'm going to turn in! I've got some arrears of sleep to make up, thanks to you, Cliff!"

"I suppose this chauffeur wouldn't let me go anywhere but to the studio?" said Martyn, after a minute, sullenly. It was a last flaring up of the devils of nervousness and desire that had precipitated his escapade.

"You haven't got any orders like that from me, have you, Steve?" said Lansing. And the driver shook his head. "Don't be a fool, Cliff!" Lansing went on. "What happened last night's rubbed off the slate. You're not going to do it again. You're going back, and you're going to work more like a dog than ever. By the way—I haven't had a chance to tell you. I got the Apollo."

Martyn's eyes brightened. His hand came out heartily.

"Now that's something like!" he said. "Good work! Bully for you! Come on, there, Steve! I've got to get on the job."

From the window, Lansing watched them drive off. His last thought, before he dropped off to sleep, a few minutes later, was of Cramer and Howell. Their first blow had failed to strike home. Where would the next one be aimed? But the thought didn't keep him awake.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN OFFER—AND A WARNING.

Lansing slept through most of the day, and woke up, hungry and fresh, about five o'clock. Another icy shower finished the process of refurbishing, and he went downtown for a sort of combined breakfast and dinner. When Debrett passed through the restaurant he hailed him. He liked the cynical little journalist—there really is no other word to describe him, much as Debrett would have resented such a title, after his newspaper training. If Debrett was looking out for the main chance all the time, and if he had few scruples as to how he got money, so that he got it, he was frank about it, at least, unlike most of the walkers of the Rialto.

"Hello!" said Debrett. He sat down and gave his order. "I've been meaning to look you up. What are you trying to bring off?"

"Nothing much," said Lansing innocently. "We're just making a feature that looks rather good to us."

"So?" said Debrett. "You've got Cliff Martyn for your director. You've rigged up a patchwork studio. You've bought the film rights of 'Crandall's Revenge,' and you're making a five-reel feature of it. Cliff went on a bender night before last, and you followed him down to Atlantic City and brought him back. Before that you took a lease on the Apollo Theater in Adelphia and gave Max Roth five hundred to bind the bargain. And you haven't been near any of the regular people who buy or lease films—State's rights men or exchanges or any one else. Anything else about your recent movements you'd like to know?"

Lansing gasped, and stared at him. And he had supposed that his tracks were well covered! Debrett sat and grinned.

"How do you know all this?" Lansing asked finally.

Debrett closed one eye and opened it again in a prodigious wink.

"I've got my own sources of information," he said. "And one reason is that I've never split on any one who told me anything—and I never will. If you ever get into this game that's something to remember. You don't need any morals—I gave 'em up years ago. You can get away with about anything short of murder or sticking up some guy that's got a pull at head-quarters. But—if you start blowing on the people that give you tips you're through. It's enough for you to know I know all this. If I know it, some other people do, too. And if you can think of any one who's in a position to crab your game because they know you'd better act accordingly. I haven't told you anything—see?"

"Yes, I see," said Lansing. "And I'm just as much obliged as if you had. Is that about all you know?"

"Ye-es," said Debrett regretfully. "It is, right now. But by to-morrow I ought to be able to tell you the size of your bank roll."

"I think *not!*" said Lansing, with decision.

He understood the significance of the statement. And he had known from the first, anyhow, that it would be vitally important to keep possible enemies from discovering the real thinness of the ice on which he was skating. Debrett, of course, had really told him a

good deal. He had strengthened the inference Lansing had drawn from the attempt to corrupt Martyn. Some one was sufficiently interested in his movements and plans to have spied upon him—very successfully. It was a fair guess that from now on matters would move fast; that there would be a definite attempt to prevent the finishing of "Crandall's Revenge," and, if that failed, to prevent its production.

There was every reason, as a matter of fact, why there should be such an attempt. The more Lansing thought of his method of reaching the public, greater did its possibilities seem to be. And it threw open the whole movie business to a host of people who hadn't yet seen a chance to dabble in it. If he succeeded, and he felt sure, now, of success, any one with the money to spend could follow in his footsteps. He would bring about the open market at which Hazzard and his enemies alike had scoffed. The little theaters would no longer be obliged to take what the exchanges chose to give them—they could take what they liked, wherever they liked. The whole industry would have to turn to the production of good films, quality films, and the possibility of a vast closed corporation, making ninety-five per cent of all the films released, would pass forever. Not that this condition wouldn't come anyhow, whether he failed or succeeded. He knew it would, and had seen it almost from the beginning. But—he wanted to be the pioneer, the man who blazed the trail.

Debrett hadn't improved his appetite. He hurried through the rest of his meal and made an excuse to get away from Debrett, who had half a dozen suggestions for the rest of the evening. As he left the place he caromed into Hazzard, who caught him by the shoulder and held him fast. Hazzard was in one of his most jovial, expansive moods. He bore Lansing in with him and planted him at his table, roaring as he did so, so that every one in the restaurant turned to stare at him. But when he really began to speak his voice couldn't be heard at the next table.

"Look here, son!" he said. "I handed it to you pretty rough when you said you wanted to sell your stock. I thought you were scared. But I guess you weren't. If you're going to stay in this business, we ought to be together. I'll make you a proposition. Bring this feature you're making along and come back. It can be released under one of our brands, and then you won't be taking any chances. You can turn in a statement of what it's cost you as far as you've gone. We'll make good on that, and take over any contracts you've got."

"Sorry," said Lansing. "But this is my own gamble. I'll have to play the hand as it lies."

Hazzard's face was swept by one of those sudden storms of passion, so terrifying to those who were not used to the man, which he seemed always to be able to call up at the right moment.

"You've seen me in action!" he said savagely. "What chance do you think you've got against me if Cramer and Howell, with all that's behind them, couldn't beat me? I'm giving you a chance to come in out of the rain—and I'm telling you it's going to rain pretty hard!"

"I'm sorry," said Lansing again. "But I'm hanged if I see where you come in, Hazzard! By George—I think you've got an awful gall! You think I've got a good thing—and you try to hold me up for a piece of it by telling me you'll try to break me if I don't hand it over! Isn't that the size of it?"

Probably it was a long time since any one had defied Hazzard in such a fashion. He was purple with anger, and the veins in his forehead were swelling dangerously.

"You can't bluff me, you know," Lansing went on, getting angrier and angrier every second. "That's how you beat Cramer and Howell—and you wouldn't even have had the chance to bluff them except for me. I'm going to keep on minding my own business, and if you don't want to get hurt, you'd better do the same thing. Good night!"

The quarrel with Hazzard wasn't of his own seeking; but, as he went out into the street, Lansing knew that it had done him a world of good. He had been close, at one time, to falling under the spell of Jim Hazzard's personality. Even now, he admired the big man as much as he had ever done. But his admiration was all for the primal, brute force of the man—for his remorseless smashing through whatever barriers might lie between himself and his desire. And the fact that he had suddenly become such a barrier was bound to temper Lansing's feelings. He felt a sort of contempt for Hazzard as he strode uptown, working off his anger with the exercise. But the contempt lasted only until the first flush of his anger wore off. For he knew that Hazzard could, and would, fight if he had to—that there were other weapons in his arsenal that could be called upon if bluff failed.

"Even if they beat me, between them, they won't win," he thought, as he walked on. "Some one else will come along and do what I couldn't do."

The thought only stiffened his resolution. He decided that he wouldn't fight the worse for knowing, positively, that he had enemies. A new joy of battle came to him that mingled with the delight he had begun to feel as he realized that he was actually doing pioneer's work. He swung aboard a bus finally and climbed to its top. All the way up Riverside Drive, he could look over to the Palisades and see the flaming lights of an amusement park, a sort of Coney Island in miniature. That glare of light was in the very heart of the film colony. A little to the north of it was the very heart of his enterprise. So he thought, as he looked. He was wrong, of course. The heart of that enterprise was wherever he himself happened to be.

He found Martyn at home, tired and cheerful, exhausted and optimistic. And, though it savored of cruel and unusual punishment, he kept the director up for three hours, talking over the details of their task.

"I guess my break didn't do much harm," said Martyn. "Teddy took hold in fine style—so far as I can see, the scenes he made will fit in all right. We've made something over thirty-five hundred feet of film. I suppose we'll have to make nearly as much more. Then I'll start cutting. It's a big wastage, but I'm trying some new things, and I've had to give myself room to make a choice here and there. About three weeks more ought to see us through. Your Brewster girl is a wonder. Morgan's better than I ever dreamed he'd be—but he's cutting up, just as I told you."

"What's his trouble?"

"He doesn't know! But I guess it's the rush. He has to get an effect in ten feet of film that he uses up ten minutes to get on the stage—and he can't use that English accent of his to help out, either. He can't see the importance of footage, and I'm tired trying to make him see it!

"But you needn't worry. We're coming on all right. Morgan's beginning to get the hang of things much better, and to-day he sized up a couple of scenes right all by himself, without a word from me. Brewster bothers him a little—he knows how good she is. But he doesn't quite see why, and it makes him fretty. Of course, he hates me. I suppose that over in England they have comic-paper Americans, like our comic-paper Englishmen. And he

thinks I'd make a fine model for a series, all right. When this is over I'm going to buy him a drink and——"

He stopped, flushing.

"Take him to tea somewhere—it'll make more of a hit with him," suggested Lansing, with a grin. "By the way, Cliff—I don't want to rake up what's over and done with. But you thought Ed Rackett just happened to come along. Listen!"

And he told him of his talk with Debrett. Martyn, of course, knew Debrett very well, and he listened, with rising anger and wonder.

"You see, we thought we were being careful," said Lansing. "But we weren't careful enough. Now you can go to bed!"

"How about Roth?" said Martyn thoughtfully. "Think you can trust him? Don't you suppose it's he that's given away that part of the game?"

"I don't see why he should," said Lansing. "I don't trust him—or distrust him, either, for that matter. Seems to me he doesn't count at all. And I suppose there are plenty of ways they could have found out I was doing business with him without getting it from him. I think he'll play fair—because he needs us as badly as we need him. If the picture makes good he saves his theater and gets a new stake. If it doesn't he's done."

"Well, he'll bear watching, anyhow," said Martyn. "I've just got a hunch that that's our weak spot. You want to make awful sure that nothing can keep us out of the Apollo when we're ready."

"I wish everything else were as sure as that!" laughed Lansing. "So long!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DESERTER.

Lansing was up and out early the next morning, with a score of trifling things to keep his morning occupied. He saw two or three men who might do for the important job of getting scientific publicity for "Crandall's Revenge" in its new form; publicity specialists, these, and far ahead of the old-fashioned press agent. These men he sounded cautiously and tentatively; until he made his choice, he didn't intend to be lavish with information. And other tasks kept him busy until lunch time, when, foregoing that pleasant meal, he crossed the river and made for the studio. Not once all morning was he where he might reasonably have been expected to be, and so all of Martyn's frantic efforts to reach him by telephone had been vain.

He knew something had gone wrong as soon as he saw Martyn's face. When he went in a scene was being made. Mary Brewster was working alone, at the moment, in a close-up, and Martyn didn't check the action to speak to him. Sitting on his stool, just under the camera, he glanced around once, and went on. But his face was eloquent, and it spoke of trouble—of trouble spelled with a big T. And when the scene was finished he turned to Lathrop.

"Get the extras and make that scene of the run on the bank—the exterior," he directed. "The set-up's all ready. We'll need about a hundred feet—we'll be cutting back and forth, and we can repeat on some of the action."

Lathrop nodded and sprang into life, vitalizing as well the group of extra people who were lounging at one side. And Martyn came over to Lansing.

"Did you get any of my messages?" he asked. Lansing's face supplied the negative answer. "Morgan's quit!" said Martyn.

"Quit! What do you mean?" said Lansing slowly. "Why—he can't quit! He's got a contract that would be binding in any court!"

"Well—he's quit just the same! Don't tell me he can't—because he's

done it! Suppose his contract is binding! You can go ahead and sue, and get damages, maybe. What good will they be?"

Sometimes, it is said, a man who has been shot will go on for several seconds, perhaps even longer, without knowing that he has been hit. Something of the sort was true of Lansing now. For a minute he was filled with the idea that it was impossible for Morgan to have quit, because he could be held liable for breach of contract. Absurdly, the thing that brought him to his senses and made him realize the truth was a sudden memory of George Ade's old quip about the man whose lawyer visited him in jail. "They can't put you in jail for that!" said the lawyer indignantly, when he heard the charge. And the man in the cell answered that that might be so—but that he most certainly was in jail!

From that point to the full realization of what Morgan's desertion meant, and the need of instant action, didn't take a second.

"I thought you'd get it!" said Martyn grimly. "Either we get him back, or thirty-five hundred feet of film and three weeks of solid plugging aren't worth a counterfeit nickel!"

"There's no chance to double him?" He knew the suggestion was futile, even as he made it. Martyn shook his head impatiently.

"It would be ten to one against our getting a ringer for him that would fool any one for a hundred feet," he said. "And, if we did, Morgan or whoever got him to quit would give it away. You can guess how quickly it would kill the film if people thought we were working such a game as that!"

"No—we can't do that," admitted Lansing. "We've got to get him back. He's one of our biggest assets—even if we could retake all we've done. Featuring the original star of the original production——"

"They've got to him, of course," said Martyn. "He'd never have thought of anything like this by himself—the shrimp! They've made it worth his while, every way, to clear out—promised him as much as he stood to make with us, and a good bit more!"

"The damned little fool!" said Lansing savagely. "He couldn't see that the biggest thing he stood to win out of this film was another chance to make a great big hit! The regular managers would have been standing in line to get at him if he'd made good in this— ~"

"We don't know who's done it," said Martyn. "But you want to remember that Cramer and Howell, just for instance, have pull enough with the theatrical syndicate to get anything in reason. Couldn't they have promised Morgan a fat part—as fat a part as Crandall was when the show was turning them away?"

"Of course!" said Lansing bitterly. "Oh—it's easy enough to see now what a chance we gave them with Morgan!"

"Yes—and I guess we know now where they found out all you were doing, too! You didn't keep very much back from Morgan, did you?"

"No! I had to tell him everything we were planning to get him to take a chance!"

They stared at one another for a minute. Each of them hated himself, blamed himself for the disaster that had overtaken the whole enterprise. For it was a disaster. Unless they got Morgan back they might as well acknowledge defeat. There wasn't money enough in reserve to finance the retaking of half the film, which would involve loss of time and a staggering addition to the pay roll.

"Roughly—what's the footage of the scenes you've still got to take that Morgan has to be in?" asked Lansing finally.

"I'll figure it up," said Martyn. He got his working scenario and began to

make calculations on a pad. Martyn might be temperamental, but there was never a moment in the taking of any picture when he could not calculate his footage to a nicety. One of the things that had been a bone of contention between himself and former employers was his waste of film, but it was a highly methodical waste, always.

"About seventeen hundred feet," he said, looking up, when he had covered a page with figures. "He's off stage a whole lot in parts three and four, and the first of five. The last five hundred feet, of course, all centers around him and the woman lead."

"Can you cut that any? And could you make all the scenes he's in in a bunch—shift the others forward and get along without him till you were ready to go right through? And how long would it take you to do all the scenes he was in—working as hard as you could?"

"I can't cut much. The order of the scenes doesn't make any difference, if we look out for changes of costume and keep a record of all details, to duplicate exactly. And it would take eight days —maybe seven—to take all his scenes." Martyn answered the questions; then asked one of his own. "Why?" he said. "What's in your mind?"

"I'm not sure yet," said Lansing. "I'm trying to dope this thing out. All I know is we've got to get him. I'm trying to have any information that may be useful handy. And so far I don't even know where he is!"

"It's a lovely mess," said Martyn. "Well—shall I go ahead? If we don't get him, every scene we take means that your bank roll gets just that much slimmer—and you might need it for a new start."

"No—go ahead!" said Lansing. "I'll worry about a new start when I have to make it. Well—I'll be off. It's a cinch the first thing to do is to find out where that rat is now!"

"Right!" said Martyn. "I'll go see how Teddy's getting on with that exterior."

Lansing started for the trolley. But he hadn't gone far when Mary Brewster's voice stopped him.

"Mr. Lansing!" she cried. He stopped and turned, and she came running toward him, her skirts flying in the wind, and her eyes, heavily blackened, showing her anxiety. Somehow, even in the sunlight, which is not merciful in such matters, her painted face didn't look ridiculous.

"Mr. Morgan's gone, hasn't he?" she asked, when she came to him.

"He's taking a little vacation—that's all," said Lansing.

"Mr. Lansing!" She stamped her foot. "I'm not a fool—and I'm not a child, either! Don't you suppose I want to see you win? And perhaps I know more than you think! Anyhow —I saw Mr. Martyn's face, and I saw the way the two of you looked when you were talking! Isn't it so? Hasn't Mr. Morgan broken his contract?"

"I think he thinks he has," admitted Lansing, after a moment's thought. "But I hope to be able to make him change his mind."

"You won't," she said. "But—perhaps I can!"

"You!" he said wonderingly. "Why, what on earth——"

"You don't even know where he is," she said. "I do! He's in a little hotel near Fifth Avenue, and he's going to sneak on board the *Baltic* to-night and sail on her to-morrow morning for England."

"For Heaven's sake!" said Lansing. There was no doubting her. It was perfectly obvious that she told the truth, and that she knew exactly what she was talking about. "How do you know?"

"Because that wasn't his original plan," she said defiantly. "He wanted to go the other way—and he wanted me

to go with him. He said if we went West we could get married somewhere where they weren't particular about a license, and have a trip around the world. I turned him down—pretty hard. I told him I couldn't even think of leaving before the picture was finished. I thought that might make him stay."

"Well—I'll be jiggered!" said Lansing. Then he seized on the salient point. "A trip around the world, eh? He must have got hold of some real money! You can guess how!"

"I'm afraid so," she said. "I—well, I didn't think he'd really do it. But, of course, I knew, when he didn't turn up."

"What hotel is he at?" asked Lansing curtly. "I'll get over there right away——"

"You will—if you take me with you," she said. "We've got to get him back, and I can see what you're planning in your eye! Wait a minute—I'll tell Mr. Martyn I'm going, and wash my face."

He had to wait, and she was back in five minutes, as a matter of fact, so that they had plenty of time to catch the next car.

CHAPTER XVIII.

REVERSE ENGLISH.

On the car, on the ferry, in the subway, when they had crossed the river, Lansing protested that it was his affair; that he, and he alone, should have the handling of Morgan. But Mary Brewster was adamant, she was firm. And then, within a block of the hotel, she exercised her feminine prerogative and changed her mind.

"You go first," she said. "I don't believe you'll be able to do anything, because I know they must have gone pretty far to get him to quit like this."

So it was Lansing, alone, who went in and asked for Mr. Robinson, that being the undistinguished alias that Morgan had chosen. It served him ill in this case, for expecting visits only from those who were in his confidence, he had taken no precautions. Lansing was shown up to his room at once. The actor was walking up and down nervously, and at the sight of Lansing his jaw dropped. But he recovered himself at once.

"What ho!" he said. "You'll have a drink—what?"

"No," said Lansing. "Look here, Morgan—what do you mean by this? Don't you realize that that contract you signed with me is binding? You've absolutely no excuse for breaking it that a court would consider for a minute ——"

Morgan waved that aside.

"My dear chap—what do we know about the bally courts? That's what we have solicitors for—eh, what? But you know, you deceived me. False pretenses, it'd be called, I dare say! Of course, you didn't mean to do it, my dear old chap, but you know, the silly ass of a law doesn't care what you mean! It's what you do—what?"

"How did I deceive you?'

"Why, you made all sorts of promises. I dare say it was all your American swank, you know—you Yankees are rippin' at that—top hole, you know! You jolly well did have me on! I fancy I'd have gone on believin' it all, too, if those other Johnnies hadn't explained it all. I mean to say, I'd have gone on thinkin' I was goin' to get lots of oof, and never dreamin' your bally old cinema show wouldn't even be shown once!"

"Whoever told you that lied," said Lansing quietly.

"Oh, no, my dear old chap—you mustn't say that, you mustn't, indeed! They're no-end friends of yours, these other Johnnies. They understand it all, and they want to keep you from—now, what did they call it? Holding the

valise? Keeping the sack? Holding the bag! That was it!"

"Suppose you tell me who told you those things?"

"Oh, no, old chap! Couldn't think of it!"

For nearly an hour, then, Lansing employed every resource of the English language, as he spoke it, without making the slightest impression on Morgan. The actor absolutely refused to discuss the legal consequences of his flight. That sort of thing, he said, must be left to the lawyer chappies. Lansing was baffled. He didn't know whether Morgan, bought off, and understanding precisely what he was doing, was playing a deep game, or whether the man was really the fool he seemed. But he decided that the last theory wouldn't hold, because the only absolute fact that emerged was that he hadn't budged Morgan an inch.

He had had some idea of bluffing—of pretending that he could have Morgan arrested. But he abandoned that even without a trial, because it was so infernally obvious that Morgan was not to be bluffed. Moreover, his reiteration of the hopelessness of going on with the picture did ring true. It made Lansing uneasy, after a time. Perhaps the opposition did have something up its sleeve, and had confided its plans to Morgan. In that case, he might not even have been bought off; he might, instead, be playing the true rat's part of deserting a sinking ship.

And there was nothing to be done. He stood by the door, at last, looking at the actor, immaculate, insignificant, in this wholly undramatic setting, wondering that he and his whole enterprise should be so absolutely at the mercy of this one queer, illogical creature. He wanted to spring on Morgan, to take him by the throat and shake him until he promised to finish his work. He knew that it wouldn't do any good, but he was close to doing it, none the less, for the sheer satisfaction of hurting this man who had him so absolutely in his power. But just then the telephone sounded, and, as Morgan went to answer it, that mood passed.

"Hello—are you there? Who is that?" asked Morgan. "Oh, I say—is that you? My word! Lansing? Yes. Rather—I'll tell him. Half a mo'!

He turned to Lansing, visibly excited.

"It's that rippin' Miss Brewster!" he said. "She wants me to put you through to her."

Lansing jumped for the telephone without ceremony.

"You've had plenty of time," said Mary Brewster's cool voice, unmelodious still, but not unpleasant. "Bring him down here to me, and we'll see what I can do. I suppose you've failed?"

"Absolutely," he answered. "I think I'd have throttled him if you hadn't called up. Where are you?"

"Downstairs," she said. "I'm glad I didn't wait any longer. I was afraid you might get violent."

She laughed, and broke the connection.

Morgan made no objection to going down. He had remarkably few nerves, but the interview was beginning to affect them.

"Right-o!" he said. "Come on, old chap! Sorry, you know, about your bally old cinema! You quite made me believe it was quite all right. But now that I've explained it, you quite understand, don't you? I mean to say, you see there's no bally use goin' on?"

Lansing sighed and followed him to the elevator, without answering. And, in the lobby, they met Mary Brewster. She smiled at Lansing and made a grimace that made him efface himself. And then she slipped her arm through Morgan's, while a fatuous smile spread itself over the actor's face, and led him to a sofa near a window. Lansing planted himself in a chair where he

commanded a good view of them, and surveyed them morosely.

He couldn't hear what was being said, of course. But he could see. Mary did most of the talking at first. She spoke vigorously, and, Lansing judged, without restraint. Once or twice Morgan protested, in a sudden rush of words, but she silenced him quickly each time and went on. Suddenly his face lighted up, and he half caught her hand. But she drew it away and talked quickly again for a minute. Then she let Morgan assume the burden of the conversation. He seemed to be pleading; she shook her head repeatedly, in negation of something he was pressing her to do. But at last she nodded—and blushed. Lansing admired that blush with every fiber in him that had to do with the theater, for he was sure that it represented an act of will, pure and simple. And then Mary jumped up and came toward him, beckoning, and Morgan followed her.

"I say, old chap—I may be a silly ass, you know," he said. "But I'm going to see you through, since you make a point of it! It won't be a bally bit of good, you know, but—well——"

"Mr. Morgan and I are engaged—sort of," said Mary, blushing again, as she met Lansing's amazed and horrified eyes. "It's a provisional engagement, and it may be ratified the day 'Crandall's Revenge' is finished."

Morgan beamed. He expected congratulations obviously, and Lansing, feeling very sick, shook his hand with an affectation of great heartiness.

"Owe it all to you, you know, old chap," said Morgan. "Never have met the dear girl, except for you! Tell that Martyn chappie I'll be over at the studio in the mornin'!"

Lansing was angry and bewildered and filled with a profound admiration for Mary. But he wanted to shake her, too, and he felt no exultation at all at the thought that Morgan would finish the picture, after all. For the first time, perhaps, he was considering Mary Brewster as a woman, a girl—a thing of flesh and blood and the other human attributes, anyhow. Hitherto she had just been an actress whose unique talent he himself had discovered. He had to readjust his whole conception of her, and he didn't have much time for the task.

"We've got to run along now—Ralph," said Mary. "You'll be over to-morrow? You won't let them make you change your mind again?"

"Word of honor!" he promised. "But—I say—aren't we even going to have dinner together?"

"I never dissipate while I'm working," she laughed. "And we're only provisionally engaged, you know! I've got to make over a dress to-night that I'm going to wear to-morrow. So I'm going to let Mr. Lansing take me home."

Morgan thought it wasn't quite right, but while he was making up his mind what to do about it, Mary and Lansing got away. And, in the street, he turned on her furiously.

"I won't have it!" he stormed. "If that's the only way to keep him here let him go back to England or to Timbuktu if he likes! I won't let you sacrifice yourself that way to save the picture——"

"You've got nothing to say about it!" she told him, with spirit. "Haven't I got something at stake in that picture, too? Don't you realize what it means to me to have it a success? I've never had a real chance before. Every time I've had a part I've lost my job because I couldn't—I simply couldn't!—do what I was told by some stupid director when I knew a way that was a thousand times better! I'd do anything to have this turn out a success——"

"Well—you've done it!" he said grimly. "Even to pretend to be engaged to that miserable rat——"

"He's nothing of the sort!" she said furiously. "It isn't his fault if those people have lied to him and he's believed them! Even now he thinks going on is a waste of time. They've told him something that's made him believe 'Crandall's Revenge' will never be produced."

"I beg your pardon," said Lansing stiffly. "I didn't understand that you might have had some other motive than the success of the picture——"

"Oh!" she said, and was speechless for a moment. "You—you're just a *man!* But I don't think I ever did know one before who didn't understand quite so many things! Good night—I'm going to take this bus!"

They were at Fifth Avenue, and she sprang on the low step of a bus just as it began to move, leaving him staring after her. He was full of anger and of admiration at once. And suddenly a curious, amazing thought came to him. Was it possible that he was jealous? When he had never, until that afternoon, thought of her except in the most impersonal way?

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LAW OF SELF-PRESERVATION.

It mattered very little whether he was jealous or not in the next few days. For now the enemy began to show his hand openly—as openly, at least, as a due regard for the laws against conspiracy allowed. Martyn, delighted at the return of Morgan, and caring very little how it had been brought about, switched his plans and rushed the scenes in which the star figured.

"We'll use him while we've got him!" he said.

He adopted heroic measures, too, and a sort of camp was established at the studio. There Morgan, protesting bitterly, had to spend his nights as well as his days. Martyn managed that, with a little help from Mary Brewster. And the studio was practically under martial law. Martyn averaged about four hours of sleep a day now, and Teddy Lathrop, who worshiped him, got little more. Suspicious characters, and in the eyes of Martyn and Lathrop every one who wasn't working in or about "Crandall's Revenge" was suspicious, couldn't get past the wire fence Martyn had built.

Martyn and Lathrop practically stood guard all night, and they had the able assistance of a pair of dogs of uncertain lineage, afflicted with insomnia, and utterly without faith in human nature.

"Not that I think they've got the nerve to do it," said Martyn. "But I don't know anything that burns any quicker than film, and some one might just happen to drop a match. We'll take no chances, anyhow. I read a story about some guy that retook about three reels of film in a week, and maybe it can be done—in a story. I'm not hankering to set any record like that, though."

Three minor characters folded their tents and silently stole away in the week that followed Morgan's return. But they could be doubled—that is, other actors were brought in, made up to resemble the deserters. More serious was the sudden disappearance of a property automobile—a plain case of theft, perpetrated, probably, before the increased vigilance of the guards. The car had been a find, in the first place—it went back to the early days of the automobile industry. Martyn, on seeing it, had instantly visualized the laugh it would get, and had assigned to it an important part. Now, when it was needed for later scenes, it wasn't to be found.

"That's the trouble with a thing like that!" he raged. "People see it, and it's a good thing—it impresses them. And they remember it. You know how important that car is in the action. We've got to get one like it—that's all!"

But this was easier said than done. Martyn did the talking, and turned to some other task, leaving Lansing to do the work. An inspiration saved him. A classmate in college had been the son of a famous automobile manufacturer. Lansing fled to Detroit overnight, amused his friend with the tale of his difficulty, and found the mate of the lost car, carefully guarded in the museum of a great factory. At that, he nearly had to steal it, but he prevailed upon the company to lend it to him at last.

"Think of the publicity!" he said. "You see—the idea is that Crandall gets the old car out when it hasn't been used for fifteen years. It runs as well as ever—and we'll give you an insert, with the name of the car. It'll be worth thousands to you!"

He got the car—and didn't realize, until later, that the publicity would be double-edged—that "Crandall's Revenge" would cut a considerable figure in the advertising of that particular car during the life of the film.

Lansing was too busy to visit the Screen Club or the eating places that were the haunts of the moving-picture men very often. He saw Hazzard once or twice, and Hazzard regarded him always with a good-natured, tolerant, pitying wonder. Debrett was gloomy; he didn't speak out, but did suggest that what had happened was only a beginning. And one night, Brewer, with whom he had worked for Hazzard, and who was still Hazzard's right-hand man, found him.

"You're playing the fool, Lansing," he said. "You haven't got a chance."

"Oh, tell Hazzard I'm not the scaring sort," said Lansing wearily. "You people make me rather tired."

"Hazzard's got nothing personal against you," said Brewer. "And, say—you want to understand that you're up against a whole lot more than Hazzard. You've got the whole industry lined up against you. Men you don't even know by sight are working to queer your game. And they're going to get you. Hazzard hasn't got any choice. He's working to protect himself, rather than to smash you. He knows you can't win out. And that's why he's offered to save your hide by taking you back with us."

"Nothing doing!" said Lansing. "I'll believe that there are others in this game, but it isn't going to make any difference. If Hazzard wants to line up with men who've been looking for his scalp just to get me, why, I think I ought to be flattered."

"I didn't say he was with them," protested Brewer. "But he may feel he's got to go in with them, before he's through. You're marked for slaughter, that's all. It won't make much difference to you who uses the ax, you know."

"Exactly," said Lansing. "Good night, Brewer!"

Luck and good management combined to avert most of the threatened dangers. Most of them were petty enough. After the automobile incident, Lathrop checked off his properties every night, but small things turned up missing at almost every roll call. Some of the people of the cast, some of the extras, two or three of the carpenters and sceneshifters, quite obviously, had listened to the siren song of the enemy's campaign fund. The trouble was to determine who was guilty. Two hundred feet of perfectly good film were ruined in developing—and after that Jim Blunt tested his developer every time he used it.

Blunt, incidentally, though he got less glory, worked as hard as any one. He was at his camera all day long, and half the night he spent in developing film, in the small but perfectly equipped dark room. He, too, slept at the studio. And one morning, after a hasty trip down to the river for a swim, he ap-

peared, with a satisfied smile and skinned knuckles.

"Big Jim Hazzard's man, Brewer," he said, "offered me a job out on the coast. Offered me a bonus to start West to-night. I pasted him one. He pasted me back, and then we had breakfast together, and he sent his regards to the boss."

These were pin pricks. Gradually the disloyal ones were weeded out. Martyn and Lansing, after consultation, took the rest of the force into their confidence, and after that volunteer watchers took a lot of the burden of protecting the plant from assault.

"They'd finish this film without another pay day, now!" said Martyn. "Of course, I picked some lame ducks—but most of this crowd I chose, knowing we were liable to run into trouble."

"They've got life jobs, the whole lot of them, if we pull through," said Lansing, with enthusiasm. "And I believe we are! They must be beginning to see that they're wasting their time."

But not five minutes later, as he left the studio, a shabby, slinking creature, with furtive eyes and a visible breath, accosted him, and slipped a paper into his hands. It was the summons and complaint in an action for breach of copyright—and gave notice of an attempt to secure an injunction against any public performance of "Crandall's Revenge." At first he was inclined to laugh at this, but Hazen, to whom he took the papers, took them seriously.

"You don't mean to say they can get an injunction?" said Lansing incredulously. "The play's been in stock ever since Morgan dropped it, and this fellow's never done anything about—and he's never collected any of the royalties, either. It's a strike suit."

"You needn't tell me that," said Hazen. "But it's not so very long since a man who held about one share of stock tied up a hundred-million-dollar bond issue by United States Steel. He didn't have any better case than this chap, but he was able to hold them up. Figured he'd be bought off, probably, but he wasn't. They could afford to fight, and spent a year or two at it. Probably you can beat this, too, if you take the time—but they'll get their temporary injunction."

"It's an outrage!" exploded Lansing.

"In this case—yes. But it doesn't always work that way. The courts are pretty free with temporary injunctions on the theory that it's better to prevent any possible injustice. Probably they'd make this fellow Hoover give a bond. You can guess how much trouble he'll have getting it!"

"Well, what am I to do?"

"I don't know yet. There ought to be some way to beat it, but I don't want you to think it's going to be easy. When a man can get a firm that includes an ex-secretary of state, a United States senator, and a former judge of the court of appeals of the State of New York to handle a case like this he's covered most of the loopholes."

"Hazzard's firm?" said Lansing.

"Exactly." But the lawyer's eyes lighted up. "Still, I've crossed swords with them once or twice before, and I haven't always lost, by any means. Give me a night to think about it."

Having no choice, Lansing gave him the night. Martyn wasn't surprised.

"I was afraid of it," he said. "I remember this chap Hoover. He collaborated with Redfield on 'Crandall's Revenge'—the play, you know. It was Redfield's novel, and Hoover was a good hack playwright, the sort who'd take a scenario and hand over the first act next day."

"That's what Redfield told me when I closed the deal with him," said Lansing. "He paid him outright—Hoover never was supposed to get any royalty. Never claimed any, either, while the play was running. Redfield told me

that when the play was making such a mint of money for him he handed Hoover a hundred-dollar bill once in a while, out of charity."

"He's been down and out for two years—touched me for a half dollar even after we started this picture," said Martyn thoughtfully. "Wonder how he's living now?"

"You might ask Hazzard. He could tell you—if he would—I guess."

"I suppose so," mused Martyn. "Say, Hazzard sent for me to-day. I wasn't going to pay any attention, but now I think I'll go see him. If your ears start tingling you'll know I'm telling him a few choice things about you."

"Better look out!" advised Lansing wearily. "He's a tough bird, Cliff."

"So'm I," said Martyn briefly. "You go and hold Hazen's hand. But take it from me, all the lawyers in the world aren't going to call Hoover off in time to do us any good. You'd better tell Hazen to figure out some way of beating that injunction after it's been granted. Something like the time when old Larry Lajoie jumped the Phillies and landed in Cleveland with the American League. They respected the injunction—sure! He got some days off every time the schedule took Cleveland into Philly for a series with the Athletics."

"Copyright's in the Federal courts—and their writs cross State lines," said Lansing. "Still, Hazen's pretty good. If there's any way of beating this game he'll find it."

"Maybe so," said Martyn. "But what we need just now is a lawyer or a conjuror or some one that can find a way when there isn't one. Shall I give your love to Hazzard?"

Lansing grinned, and let him go. He was determined to be very cheerful, very optimistic. He refused to worry about this latest attack until he had to. And he went home trying to hypnotize himself into believing that Hazen would find a way.

It was about midnight when the insistent ringing of his telephone roused him. He answered it sleepily, resentfully. And his resentment wasn't lessened by the discovery that it was Sandy Brangwyn who was at the end of the wire.

"For Heaven's sake, don't you know I'm working these days, Sandy?" he said irritably. "I've resigned from the all-night society!"

"You'd better reconsider," said Sandy, with undiminished good nature. "Your little friend Martyn's trying to corner the available supply of the demon rum. I've been hearing about him since ten o'clock—he's making quite a dent, even for Broadway. I've just caught up with him, here in Priest's. Come on down, and I'll leave word for you, if I can. Anyhow, I'll stick right to him, and telephone for you back here, if he moves on."

Lansing was wide awake now.

"Thanks, Sandy," he said. "I apologize. You're all to the good! I'll be down as soon as I can get dressed."

His thoughts were lurid, as he flung himself into his clothes. He might have known that Hazzard would overcome Martyn! But surely Hazzard had behaved, since his trip to Atlantic City, like a man who could be trusted. He hesitated for a minute. After all, was it worth while to go down? Was there any hope that he could influence Martyn again? But he went.

In his play time, in the days before the failure of Lansing's, he had been able to find his way about among the white lights, though he had never made a cult of the pursuit of pleasure that goes on under their glare. But even in the comparatively short time that had passed, things had changed. He saw few familiar faces as he entered Priest's. A new generation of pleasure seekers seemed to have sprung up.

There was a message for him; his "party," the boy at the telephone told him, had gone on to a noisier place. For nearly an hour, while the crowds everywhere thinned out, Lansing wandered about, always finding messages from the faithful Sandy, but never quite catching up.

At last, however, Sandy met him at the door of a place west of Seventh Avenue—a place he could not have entered alone, since the legal closing hour had passed. Sandy's easy "Friend of mine, Bill," proved sufficient, however, and they passed into a dark, narrow passage.

"Easy, Bob!" said Sandy. "You want to go slow here. Hazzard's just come in. He's pretty happy himself, and he's opening wine as fast as they can bring it. Tried to ring me in on the party—said he remembered my face, though he didn't know why. I slipped out. I think he's trying to get a little souse away from Martyn. Martyn's ugly. He's come up to me about six times and threatened to punch my head —said he knew what I was doing, all right—that I was watching him, so as to tip you off. Then he said he hoped I'd do it—that he'd like a chance to tell you what he thinks of you."

"Wonder if I couldn't look on a bit without being seen," suggested Lansing.

"I've spent money enough here to have a pull," said Sandy. "I'll see."

This was a place where such a request did not seem strange. It was easily arranged, and Lansing smiled sourly when he saw his quarry. Martyn sat with his arm about a fat, bloated little man—Hoover. And he was defying Hazzard.

"All li'l' palsh togesher!" he said. "Go 'way, Hazzard! Tryin' shpoil party!"

He seemed to be overcome suddenly by a sort of futile rage. Also, he was quite sure that it was his mission in life to care for Hoover. First he denounced Hazzard. Then, with an abrupt transition of his mood, he grew tearful, and promised to see that Hoover was at Hazzard's office next morning. He would send him by parcel post, if necessary, he promised. Hazzard considered the matter, gave up reluctantly, and moved ponderously to the door. Brangwyn, scouting, watched him into a taxicab. And then Lansing advanced openly upon Martyn. Not more than a dozen people were left in the place now, and these were concerned with their own affairs.

Martyn was not too far gone to recognize Lansing. Nor was he abashed. On the contrary. He began at once a tirade of abuse. Lansing, he complained, was a slave driver. He would deny those who worked for him those common rights—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—guaranteed to all free-born Americans by the Constitution. Lansing didn't have a chance to get a word in edgewise.

"That's the stuff, ol' boy!" said the admiring Hoover. It was a long time since any one had made much of Hoover; Martyn's friendship had gone to his head quite as much as had his potations. But these had been busy, also.

"Suppose you cut out this foolishness, and come home!" said Lansing savagely.

"Home!" said Martyn, suddenly stricken. The word struck some hidden chord responsive. His shoulders shook, and he covered his head with his hands. "Home!" he said tearfully. "Hoover, look at tha' man, there—Lanshing!"

"I'm looking," said Hoover, striving for dignified utterance. "Shall I soak him in the jaw, pal?"

"Look at him again!" said Martyn. "Hoover, ol' frien', he'sh been father, mother, sishters, auntsh, whole family

t' me! An' thish ish how we treat him! Hoover, you pal o' mine?"

Hoover had no words to express the degree of his affection for Martyn.

"Hoover!" said Martyn. "If I had million dollarsh, I'd give it all t' him! Any man'sh pal o' mine got to prove it! What would you give tha' man Lanshing?"

"Anything *at* all!" said Hoover passionately. And broke down. He was destitute—no better than a beggar, he explained. He forgot, of course, that for two years this had been literally true. There was a conspiracy against him. Some one—he couldn't remember who it was—had lately tried to rob him even of his share of "Crandall's Revenge"—the noblest child of his brain.

"Tha'sh it—you give him that!" said Martyn, as one suddenly inspired. "You're no cheap shport—you're my pal! You'd never let me give him million dollarsh an' not give him anythin' at all!"

"Never!" agreed Hoover. He made a magnificent gesture, directed at Lansing, upon whom a great white light was slowly breaking. "It'sh yoursh—all yoursh!" he said.

"Got t' be in writin'!" said Martyn solemnly. "Waiter, bring me paper 'n' pen 'n' ink."

Only Sandy Brangwyn and Lansing, exchanging quick looks, saw that the paper that Hoover signed with trembling hand was not the one that Martyn scribbled upon, but another sheet that Martyn had taken from his pocket. Brangwyn was one witness, the manager was another. Hoover signed, and promptly went to sleep. And Martyn stood up, a little unsteady, but in remarkably good condition.

"I'm not saying I feel fresh," he said. "There were times when I couldn't spill it on the floor—especially when Hazzard was around, and early in the evening. But I guess you won't stick to your treatment this time, Bob!"

"You were planning this all the time?" said Lansing. "Why didn't you let me know?"

"No use, till I knew I had a chance to put it over," said Martyn. "And I knew old Brangwyn, here, would tip you off." He looked at Hoover. "Seems pretty low down," he said regretfully. "But it was the only chance I saw. It was just a holdup—he didn't have any more of an interest in that show than the head usher of the theater it played in."

"It might be charitable to keep him out of Hazzard's way for a while," suggested Brangwyn.

"I guess it's up to us to look out for him," said Lansing. "I doubt if there's any chance of straightening him out—but I'll see what one of these cures can do. We'll call it pay for his assignment of his interest in the show. By the way, is that in good legal form, Cliff?"

"If it isn't, it's up to Hazen," said Martyn dryly. "I gave him a hint of what I thought of doing. He said that, as a lawyer, he couldn't sanction any such procedure, but that if I should bring it off, I ought to use such and such a form, and then he called in a stenographer and dictated it. He said it was all hypothetical."

"It was," said Lansing. "But it isn't now. Well, I guess we've got them beaten now, Cliff! You finish the camera work to-morrow, don't you?"

"To-day," said Martyn. "I guess you'll see some rosy streaks of dawn when we get outside. Come on, there's a hotel 'round the corner where they'll look after Hoover, if we pay in advance. I guess I'll bunk with you."

CHAPTER XX.

THE CENSOR.

Lansing's conscience troubled him when he thought of Hoover. True enough, Hoover deserved no consideration. He had simply let himself be

used by Hazzard, and he didn't even have the excuse of thinking that he had some interest in "Crandall's Revenge." But even if the end justified the means, if it was fair to use fire against fire, it went against the grain. And so, after he had seen Martyn off to the studio, he went down to the Tenderloin hotel where they had left Hoover. They were used to such guests, and they had restored him to some semblance of manhood. He was eating a breakfast skillfully devised to appeal to one in his condition when Lansing went up to his room. And he regarded Lansing with hostility and without recognition.

"Who the devil are you?" he inquired.

"My name's Lansing, and you met me last night—early this morning, maybe—while you were with Martyn."

"Oh, Martyn—yes!" said Hoover. He passed his hand before his aching eyes.

"Look here!" said Lansing. "Do you remember anything at all about the way you've been acting lately? About letting Jim Hazzard use you to keep me from producing 'Crandall's Revenge'? About swearing to some false statements——"

"Oh, you're that Lansing, are you?" said Hoover. His voice rose until, at the end, he was fairly screaming. "You can't bluff me!" he cried. "You say I lied—prove it! I'm not afraid of you. Jim Hazzard's back of me—and he's big enough to break you in little pieces——"

"Hold on!" said Lansing. "Hoover, we played a pretty low trick on you last night, Martyn and I. Do you remember signing anything?"

Hoover started. His lips parted, as if he were about to say something. But then a light of low, animal cunning shone in his eyes.

"You can't come anything like that over me!" he said defiantly. "What are you trying to get at?"

"I've got at it already, Hoover," said Lansing. "You're a pretty poor sort of thing. You're about as low as I've ever seen a man who had a decent chance get. For two years you've lived by cadging, and you haven't even tried to do anything for yourself. Now you've let Jim Hazzard turn you into a blackmailer. We couldn't hope to argue with you—so we fooled you. You signed an agreement last night giving me any pretended interest you had in 'Crandall's Revenge.' I'll give you three guesses about what Hazzard will do when he hears about it."

"It's a lie!" screamed Hoover. "And if I did, it isn't binding! I was drunk—I wasn't responsible!"

"Binding enough," said Lansing, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Your perjury made it likely you'd get an injunction—and this thing you've signed offsets that. Hold on, now—I told you it was a pretty low trick, no matter what you'd done. I don't enjoy dipping into mud just because my opponent has done it. But I had to."

Hoover wasn't much of a villain. He had the will to be a rascal, perhaps, but dissipation had sapped his whole being. A man who wants to succeed in crooked paths needs good nerves, a clear brain. Quite suddenly, and without the least warning, Hoover broke down completely, which was the last thing Lansing expected.

"I might have known it!" he wailed. "Hazzard told me it was safe. I guess it was for him. He didn't care what happened to me."

And he went on. He confessed everything, and he threw himself on Lansing's mercy. It wasn't a pretty sight. Waves of disgust swept over Lansing, and he wanted to get away.

"Shut up!" he said finally. "Look here, I want to do something for you. You used to have some sort of ability.

If you could do jobs like the dramatization of 'Crandall's Revenge,' you must have had a sort of talent. Suppose I give you a chance to straighten out? I'll pay your way through some sort of cure, and when you come out I'll see that you get work, or money—provided I'm not broke then."

Hoover stared at him dully. He didn't understand.

"I can't blame you for trying to hold me up," Lansing went on. "You're not responsible for that—it's up to Hazzard. And I'm figuring that if you'd made a clean-up you might have had a chance to get on your feet. So I'll give you that same chance. Will you take it?"

"Oh, sure!" said Hoover. "I will—now! My head feels as if a couple of fellows were standing over me with big clubs, hammering the way they do when they're driving piles—first one, then the other. I always want to quit the stuff in the morning after a toot. But it's different at night."

Lansing knew a doctor who had handled cases like Hoover's. He telephoned to him now, explained the circumstances, and guaranteed the expenses. And then, with a lightened conscience, he departed. He stood in the sunshine, when he got to the street, and breathed deep. There was something infinitely depressing about Hoover. He represented one of the by-products of this game that Lansing was playing. It was a game, a life, in which old standards were twisted. It was a game that rested upon the creation of illusion, and in which it was fatally easy to substitute deception for illusion. It was a game of easy victories as well as hard, fine struggles. It was a game in which the trickster, the sharper, won, or seemed to win, as often as the honest man who wanted to earn his rewards.

And—was the game worth the candle? Was there real profit to be found in it—profit, that is, aside from the money a man might make? He thought of Hazzard, caught up in the fierce swirl, seeming, now, to prefer trickery, downright dishonesty, to the fierce, clean fighting by which he had got his start. He thought of Martyn, an artist, crushed and discouraged, swept into a backwater, until he had nearly become like the pitiful creature he had just left. And then he thought of Martyn again, responding to the call of opportunity, rallying himself, holding to the ideal he had formed. He indulged in that rarest of things, a moment of self-analysis.

And he knew, with a great rush of pride, that it was worth while. He knew that he was fighting not for money, but for success, to prove his own quality to himself. And he knew that if he won, it would be because he could supply a public need—and that he need not be ashamed. He and Martyn had met fire with fire, they had beaten tricks with tricks, but all that was beside the point. Deep down, they were playing a clean game cleanly.

Yet there were things that rankled, and most of all the memory of how Morgan had been won over to stay and finish the picture. Was Mary Brewster simply playing with the Englishman? Had she reasoned that it was as fair for her to trick him as for him to break his contract? Or did she really intend to marry him? He swore, at the thought of that. Even now he didn't fully understand his own feeling about the girl. He admired her; he believed that she was an artist, and would become a great one, in a new field, that had not, heretofore, enlisted many artists. But his mind was in a state of hopeless confusion concerning her. He didn't know whether he simply cherished the primitive male resentment at owing succor to a woman, or whether some deeper, more intimate, feeling was at work within him. Ridiculous as it

seemed—for he could understand that this affair of Mary Brewster might easily transcend in importance everything connected with his enterprise—he had been too busy, since that day, to learn his own mind.

As for her, she had been tantalizing, provoking, both to Morgan and Lansing. She had evaded Lansing's few and tentative efforts to discuss the matter. And she had absolutely refused to let Morgan claim any of the rights of an engaged man, as she had refused to announce that an engagement existed. None did, she insisted—it was a purely provisional arrangement. Morgan had raged, but he hadn't been able to do anything about it.

Lansing searched the studio in time to witness a celebration. Martyn, with a touch of sentiment, had reserved the final scene of the picture to be taken last, although the scenes that had led up to it had been taken in what must have seemed, to any one except the director himself, a hopeless and inextricable confusion. At his entrance, Martyn cried out.

"We've been waiting for you!" he said. "Here we are—the last scene of the last reel! Picture!"

At the word, action began. The film began to run, with Jim Blunt, alert, steady, turning the crank, and counting mechanically. Swiftly, surely, the action proceeded. Lansing, in the background, warmed to the way these people did their work. They had authority. They made their points tellingly, without wasting a second or a foot of film. Martyn sat almost silent; only once or twice did he bark out a short, sharp suggestion. And then——

"Break!" he cried.

At once the tension relaxed. Everywhere a sort of gasp went up. It was all over. The picture was finished. The part that all these people had been playing in it was accomplished, for better or for worse. Lansing, looking around, understood what they felt, the sense of achievement that had come to them. And he understood, too, that this was not common—that something had welded all of them into an enthusiastic body such as had never before taken part in the making of a picture. They had absorbed the energy, the spirit, that he and Martyn had devoted to the enterprise. It was their enterprise as well as his.

For a moment there was silence. Then a storm of talk broke out, hysterical, high-pitched from the women; eager and excited from the men. Words emerged from the jumble. "Wonderful!" "A great picture!" "Epoch-making!" Half crying, half laughing, Mary Brewster flung herself upon Martyn and kissed him.

"Oh, I say!" complained Morgan. "That is a bit thick—what?"

So she kissed him, too. Lansing, outside of it all, somehow caught the spirit of it—the childish delight they all took in what they had done. It was naïve, it was absurd. But there was a sort of significance to it, too. These people could not do the work they did, could not create that magical atmosphere of illusion that was the secret of success, unless they were capable of just such outbursts of emotion, frank, naïve, unashamed. And he was fired, seeing and understanding, with a new realization of his own part, of how absolutely imperative it was that he should let nothing interfere with ultimate success. That was up to him. These people had done their share. He could not fail them.

Martyn's voice broke in on the celebration.

"General call—for Saturday morning," he said. "You've all done well—and more than well. Maybe I've been pretty rough at times. But I'm mighty well satisfied now. Work stops right now—but pay goes on until Saturday, for extras as well as principals. On

Saturday, I'll make an announcement about future plans. And now—clear the studio, if you please. I've still got a little work to do."

There was a general laugh, for they knew, these professionals, how much work he really had to do. And in five minutes they were gone, scattered to the improvised dressing rooms, and only the echo of their laughter remained. Blunt was developing; Lathrop was gathering up his properties. The mechanical force was busily engaged in clearing away the set-up. Electricians were disconnecting the wires of the great batteries of vacuum lights and arcs.

"We're on the home stretch!" said Lansing. He drew a deep breath. "I've arranged with the censorship people to view the picture Tuesday morning. That gives you time enough?"

"Working nights—yes," said Martyn. "How about Adelphia? You've got to go up against the local censors there, you know."

"They never dare to touch anything the National Board passes," said Lansing. "But it's arranged, anyhow—for next Wednesday morning. The paper goes up as soon as I wire releasing it. We'll open a week from Monday night. And we're just about coming through! When I've cleaned up this week's pay roll and paid the bills I'll have about five hundred left."

"Close figuring—but we've had some unexpected expenses." Martyn grinned as he said it. "I'd like to know what Hazzard and company have spent. Say, I didn't tell you before—didn't have a chance. But when I went to Hazzard's last night, Howell came out of his room just as I went in."

"I thought they'd join forces," said Lansing. "Hazzard never lets his personal likes and dislikes interfere with business."

"Well, we've got them licked, anyhow. Get your telegram off. I've done some work on this cutting and arranging already—the first three reels are practically ready. I'll keep Blunt here to-night. If they don't fall down on us with the positives we'll be all right."

Routine work was Lansing's portion now. He was full of curiosity about Mary Brewster and Morgan, but he had not the time to satisfy it. He had engaged his press agent—a young and ambitious trade-paper man called Baker, who thought more of the opportunity than the pay. He entered into the spirit of Martyn and Lansing. He was in Adelphia now, getting the belated publicity that was so vital to the film's success.

And in and around New York there was plenty to be done. The making of the positives was being rushed; that involved constant supervision and jacking up. Hazzard and the rest had struck too often for Lansing to assume that they would overlook any chances. The committee of the national board that passed on the film proved finicky. Lansing labored with it, worked to convince it that no changes were needed. Yet there were scenes that had to be hastily cut and patched. The censors, a voluntary body, without real authority, maintained by the manufacturers, have certain fixed rules; the very nature of the work compels them to consider the letter, rather than the spirit.

Yet everything moved smoothly. "Crandall's Revenge" was getting a full meed of publicity, now that the secrecy was at an end. The trade papers were full of the film, and of Lansing's idea. Two or three of the bigger State's rights concerns, interested, approached Lansing.

"If you put this thing over in Adelphia you've got us where you want us," said one of these men. "You're offering us a big chance—and I guess I'm not too hidebound to see it! The manufacturers thought they had us on the run with their big exchange systems

—but I guess this is going to make them sit up and take notice!"

This was an accolade, really. It meant success—the big success that would justify everything. For it meant distribution. Already, Lansing began to think of the successor of "Crandall's Revenge." It ought to be begun at once—the time to strike was while the iron was hot. His depleted capital didn't worry him. Once the success of "Crandall's Revenge" was assured he could borrow all the capital he needed, and on his own terms.

Off to Adelphia went Martyn, with Blunt and Lathrop to act as escort to him and the five precious metal containers in which the five-thousand-foot parts of "Crandall's Revenge" were packed. Lansing, planning to leave next day and reach Adelphia in time to hear the verdict of the local censorship, waited to attend to final details. And to his tiny office, late that afternoon, came Jim Hazzard, unannounced, flinging open the door, and filling the small room beyond the desk at which Lansing sat.

"Hello!" said Lansing. He was bubbling with triumph; exultation sent the blood dancing through his veins like champagne. He couldn't harbor anger. The man who has won seldom can. "Come around to make up?"

"You said it!" grunted Hazzard. "You're a two-fisted man! You've put up a fight I'd have been proud to make myself. You've come near to licking us. And because of that I won't see you go down. I'll do what I've never done before—I'll make again an offer that's been turned down once. Western Film will take over your film as it stands, pay what it cost to produce it. And you can come in with me!"

Lansing stared. Hazzard was looking straight at him. And his eyes were the calm, confident eyes of a man who has the game in his hands.

"We've got you, boy," he went on. "You've beaten us up to now—but this time we've left nothing open. We could have beaten you before if we'd known how little money you had—but none of us dreamed you had the gall to make a play like this on a shoe string! I'm not bluffing—I can tell you, within fifty dollars, what you've got left."

Lansing laughed.

"You've tried to bluff me before!" he began.

"I know it," said Hazzard; "and you've called our bluff. So this time we dealt ourselves the cards. If we did it from the bottom of the pack, that won't save you! Hear me, now—and understand it's facts I'm telling you. You'll not open at the Apollo come Monday night. You'll not show your picture in Adelphia at all. And you've not the money to hang on while you find another theater—which you could not do without building it, not if you had the subtreasury to draw from!"

For a minute they stared at one another. Not for a moment did Lansing doubt that Hazzard spoke the truth. That he could not conceive of a way in which this could be so mattered not at all. There was conviction in Hazzard's whole appearance. This time, at least, he was not bluffing.

"Come, what do you say?" said Hazzard. "We've no hard feelings. It's to protect ourselves we've fought you. You're trying to put over something that would change the whole business—and we like it as it is. It's to show we've no grudge that I make you the offer. Come—yes or no?"

"No," said Lansing very quietly, very quickly, very finally. "Oh, I believe you!" He cut off Hazzard's words with a gesture. "But I'll take my chance of losing it all. I won't sell out. You've admitted the big thing—that I'm on the right track. And I'll tell you now—even if you smash me, some one else will do what I've tried to do. So, even if you win, you lose."

Hazzard looked at him, weighed him.

"You're a fool, after all!" he said. "My offer's withdrawn! But remember it was made!"

He went out. Lansing sat for a long time, thinking. And, curiously, he slept as well that night as he had ever slept in his life. This surprised him when he woke up in the morning. A few hours later, he was in Adelphia. And there any lingering hope that Hazzard might, after all, have been making one last, gigantic bluff, was dispelled.

"They've refused to pass the film!" Martyn told him. "And they've served notice on Roth that if it's shown he'll lose his license."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST TRICK.

Baker, almost sobbing with rage, had the explanation ready.

"This town's boss ridden!" he said. "Talk about Tammany! Why, Tammany never even dreamed of trying the things they pull off here without batting an eye! The gang here has absolute power, because it runs the State as well as the city. And this moving-picture censorship was created just because of the chance of graft.

"Hazzard saw it—saw it before any one. While the other manufacturers fought the bill, he backed it. And it's been in his pocket from the start. Don't ask me what it costs him! But I guess he gets his money's worth. That's the only virtue these crooks down here have. They stay bought. When they've once taken your money, you own them."

"There's no way of beating it?"

"I hired a lawyer, and he's trying to get an injunction," said Martyn. "But he doesn't give us any hope. He says the higher courts would probably give us a square deal, but that means from six months to a year. And there's no way of getting into the United States courts—which aren't for sale."

"Then we'll pass up Adelphia," said Lansing crisply. "One thing I won't do—bang my head against a stone wall. Martyn, you and Baker stay here till you hear from me. Keep your lawyer busy. File notices of appeal. Baker, start a campaign in the reform papers, if you can—try to kick up a scandal. Make it seem that we're going to fight it out to a finish here. But—don't spend any real money."

"What are you going to do?" asked Martyn.

"I don't know yet. But I'm going down with every gun that's above water firing! I'm going back to New York. We're blocked here—that's sure. So the only thing to do is to try to win somewhere else. That's why I want you two to stay here and make a bluff. If Hazzard thinks we're still hoping to come through here, he won't be so watchful of other places—New York, for instance."

Hazzard had made good his threat. Certainly his hand had been dealt from the bottom of the pack—but certainly, too, it was the high hand. Lansing, settled in his train, was in a cold rage.

Trick for trick—chicane for chicane. Anything was fair now, he knew—any weapon might be used that should come to his hand. But none came. Looking out of the car window, he saw the smoke of New York rising, the great sky line piercing the clouds, before even the germ of an idea came to him.

He knew precisely what forces were aligned against him now. Cramer and Howell stood with Hazzard. They would contribute to the unholy alliance the great theatrical syndicate with which they were connected. That closed more than half the theaters in New York to him at once, and, through its truce with the sometime independent group, the syndicate could now bar him from the rest. There were independent

theater owners in New York, of course. But they were helpless. They would not dare to come to his aid, for the plays they produced, to be profitable, must have long road tours—and the road was closed to those who offended the syndicate or the group with which it was temporarily allied.

If he had money, he could wait, bide his time, seize the chance that would surely come later. But—he had no money, and the enemy knew it. He had staked all on a moment—and the moment was passing. He did think of Sandy Brangwyn, but only to cast the thought out. That refuge he would not seek.

And then suddenly, like a lightning flash, a half-forgotten bit of knowledge came to him. It was the thought of Brangwyn that recalled it. He seized upon it now, worried it, turned it around, considered it from every aspect. More and more certain grew its meaning—and the way that he could turn that meaning to account. It was only the faint ghost of a chance that it showed him, and yet that was infinitely better than the sure knowledge that there was no chance at all. He was frantically eager, now, for the train to reach the terminal. And the moment it did so he was out, and speeding for a telephone booth. He wanted Brangwyn, and his luck seemed to have turned, for the first number he called proved the right one. He wanted release from a light pledge of secrecy—and got it, by the very urgency of his tone.

And then, in a taxicab, he made for a theater in the heart of the upper Broadway region. In the old days, he had amused himself, more than once, by taking an interest in certain plays, productions made by the man he was now on his way to see, who was the head of those opposition managers now bound to the syndicate by a temporary and, Lansing hoped, an insecure truce. He depended upon his old connection with Frobert for an interview, and not in vain. But Frobert shook his head playfully, even while he greeted him.

"I can guess what you want, Mr. Lansing," he said. "I'd like to give you a theater—but it would mean a fight with the syndicate, and we are not ready to start that again yet."

The frank cynicism of this didn't surprise Lansing, nor did it disgust him. He knew his Broadway too well.

"I'm outside of this, you understand," Frobert went on. "But I've had my orders—you're not to get a theater. Anything else I can do——"

"Hold on!" said Lansing. "You and I know one another of old, Frobert. You're just waiting for a good chance to jump at Klanger's throat—Klanger and his whole syndicate, aren't you? You're waiting till the time is ripe?"

Frobert shrugged his shoulders in an expressive, Oriental gesture.

"It may be," he said. "We have had differences before. I suppose we may have them again."

"But right now you're observing a truce. You're playing fair with one another. Neither side is expanding?"

"That is so."

"Then how do you account for the fact that Klanger holds an option on the Brangwyn property three blocks from here—the only available theater site on Broadway that's coming into the market in the next fifteen years?"

Frobert jumped up as if Lansing had shot him. His face went dead white, and his small, beady eyes were glittering.

"Is that true?" he cried. "If——"

"I've got it from Mr. Brangwyn himself," snapped Lansing. "I suppose you know that he and I are old friends. If Klanger had had sense enough to act for himself and ask Brangwyn to keep it quiet, I couldn't tell you. But he was so damned careful that he

wouldn't even trust Brangwyn—and Sandy found out who the agent was acting for by accident."

Frobert, small, dapper, raged up and down the office. He held a fountain pen in his hand, and suddenly he crushed it, so that the ink spurted and covered his whole hand.

"And I thought Klanger would play fair!" he said at last. "Mr. Lansing—you may have saved me from a very bad beating. You shall have your pick of any empty theaters I control! As to terms—we shall not quarrel. You have done me a favor, and my worst enemies have never said I was not grateful. Yes, you shall have the Thespis—it is best. Telephone now to Adelphia and have copies of all your paper sent over—my own people will get it out. By to-morrow we will have the town covered. You shall open Monday, as you planned—but here, instead of in Adelphia."

There was work for all of them who were behind "Crandall's Revenge" in the last days before its production. Baker proved himself a jewel among press agents. Skillfully he allowed just enough of the truth to leak out. People, reading of the sudden fierce renewal of the Klanger-Frobert feud, knew that it was connected in some way with "Crandall's Revenge."

And then came Monday night—and a packed house that left no doubt of the public appetite for real photo plays, produced as this one had been. Before the last reel was finished, the State's rights men were besieging Lansing, dinning their offers in his ears. He put them off, and in the lobby, eager to get away, he met Hazzard. Hazzard's eyes were twinkling; his huge frame shook with mirth.

"I'll forgive you for beating me for the crimp you put in Howell and Cramer and that swine Klanger!" he roared. "And—you can show your film in Adelphia whenever you get ready. I've sent word."

"Haven't you got any shame?" asked Lansing curiously. But then he laughed. After all, this was Hazzard—an integral part of the man he had admired in the beginning, whose personality it was that had led him into this adventure that had given him back his self-respect.

They shook hands as if nothing had ever come between them. And Lansing passed on wearily, but drawing in satisfaction with every breath of the cool night air. People were looking up, as he passed them, at the great electric sign that proclaimed the new film. His own name was linked with that of the film, and he thought of the day when he had seen people looking curiously at the great bulk of Lansing's store, emblem of his failure, his worthlessness, as they looked now at something that symbolized his proving of his right to the name he bore.

So he came to the restaurant where they were to celebrate—the little group who had helped him to make this success. That had been Martyn's idea. Martyn would be there, and Baker, Mary Brewster, Morgan, Teddy Lathrop, Jim Blunt, one or two of the principals. At the thought of Mary Brewster he flushed. And, curiously, she was the only one who was in the private room he had engaged.

"Well!" she said. "You won! And you're going to be rich, and I'm going to be famous——"

"Look here!" he said suddenly. "Are you going through with it? Are you going to marry Morgan? Didn't you promise him you would, just to keep him from spoiling the film?"

She turned on him angrily.

"What right have you got to say that?" she asked. "If I've married him——"

"Married him!" gasped Lansing. It struck him like a blow. And he understood, all at once, exactly what his feel-

ing had been. He was jealous—because he wanted her for himself. "You can't have done that! Why, I——"

She faced him, and he saw the wave of color that swept over her face, and the quick flash of her eyes.

"You!" she said. "You care—like that?"

And then the color receded, and the depths of her gray eyes grew somber, and lines of despair seemed to settle about them, and in the corners of her mouth.

"Oh!" she cried. "What else could I do? If he had gone, the film couldn't have been finished—you'd have lost everything! And there wasn't any other way to keep him. I couldn't bear to see you lose everything that way. If I'd known you cared—I suppose I couldn't have done it. But you didn't then—and how could I think you ever would?"

He was abashed, speechless, before that revelation.

"And now!" she said dully. "I've got to go through with it—haven't I? I promised. He did what I made him promise to do—and if he kept his word, how can I go back on mine?"

"You're not married to him yet?" said Lansing. That seemed to be the important thing. He wanted to take her in his arms, and hold her so, defiantly, when Morgan came. But he knew, somehow, that she would not allow that. He saw the way she was torn—and he saw, too, that she meant to do what was right. They were still looking at one another when Sandy Brangwyn came in. He was chuckling.

"Some night!" he observed, not noticing that anything was wrong. "But, I say—your English friend is up against it for fair! Friend wife hears he's making a pot of money—and turns up for her share!"

"Morgan's *wife?*" said Lansing. Exultation was in his voice, and once more the color flooded Mary Brewster's cheeks.

"Right!" said Sandy. "Wife's a bad thing for a matinée idol—so he left her in dear old London, don't you know! But it seems he wrote her a while ago that he was going to get a divorce over here, and that it was all off, or words to that effect. So she came over to spank him, and show him just where he got off! They were having it out hot and heavy when I broke away, downstairs. Martyn's trying to patch it up."

"Is this straight, Sandy?" asked Lansing. "This isn't one of your jokes?"

"Not a bit of it!" said Sandy indignantly. "She scared the truth out of him. He wanted to get hitched up with some chicken he met here—he was explaining that he'd heard you could stop off between trains at Reno and get a divorce for the asking. But I guess the lady from London will fix that!"

Mary Brewster laughed. Lansing caught the hysterical note, and he took Brangwyn by the shoulders very firmly, and pushed him through the door.

"Go and get the others—and don't come back for ten minutes." he said.

And when Sandy and the rest, with Morgan missing, did return, only Mary's high color remained to bear witness to what had happened. No one thought anything of Lansing's own flushed cheeks, for the success of "Crandall's Revenge" accounted for them. But when Sandy proposed a ponderous toast to the famous film and to its many successors, Lansing got up to answer.

And he proposed a toast to all who had had a part in the making of the film, and to all who would help to make those that were to follow.

"But I think there'll have to be a new woman lead," he said. "Because, you see, there won't be any Miss Brewster. And I think Mrs. Lansing will be too busy to do much acting!"

The Luck of Captain Slocum

By H. De Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Pearl Fishers," "The Buccaneers," Etc.

Here is a man of adventure whose chase after Luck had made his life a stormy one. Had you stripped him you would have found the makings of half a dozen romances in the shot holes and knife wounds marking his epidermis. His exploits in the islands of the Pacific, which are set forth by Mr. Stacpoole, have a certain individuality that makes them unique.

I.—THE FORTUNATE ISLAND

THE steadily breathing trade wind was giving the *Contra Costa* a good ten knots, and Captain Slocum, who had just come up from below, stood with one huge, mahogany-colored fist grasping the weather rail of the schooner and his eyes scanning the sea.

It was just after sunrise. The morning bank had vanished, and the Pacific, all beautiful with the blue and gold of early day, stretched to the far horizon, unbroken by sail or wing of sea bird.

Slocum might have been fifty. A hard man to look at and a harder man to deal with, he had gone through life without making a fortune, and he had set out in life to find one.

He had poached seals in the Yellow Sea; he had fished for trepang and bêche de mer on the New Guinea coast; he had tried coconut growing in Portuguese Timor; he had swapped guns and ammunition for gold dust in murky, mangrove-shadowed Bornean rivers with a Dutch gunboat feeling for him in the lower reaches. Dealings with Chinese hatchet men had left him a scar that ran from his left ear to his chin, and had you stripped him you would have found the makings of half a dozen romances in the shot holes and knife wounds marking his epidermis.

Always, or nearly always, on the crooked, he had been followed through life by appalling bad luck as far as the making of money was concerned; time and again he had grasped Fortune, and time and again she had eluded him.

And the strange thing about this pirate lay in the fact that his ideal in life was peace. Some men's dreams of fortune show palaces and yachts; Slocum's nowadays showed a farm; a great big farm where he could drive about in his own buggy and grow pigs and corn and watch the cows coming home to be milked.

Now Slocum some months ago had netted five thousand dollars in a questionable deal in San Francisco. It was just enough money to be of no use to him, so he said, and he was looking about for some new form of crookedness in which to invest it when Captain Rogers, of the schooner *Contra Costa*, made him a proposal. Rogers, who was owner of the schooner suggested that

the captain should invest his money in a cargo of trade goods, canned salmon, tobacco, trade gin, knives, printed cottons, and so forth, and, with Rogers for skipper, take the schooner down to the islands and try his luck; the profits were to be equally divided, Rogers providing the crew and victualing them, the food and drink of the after guard to be paid for equally by Rogers and Slocum.

The captain mused on this proposition for a while, and, attracted maybe by its unaccustomed flavor of honesty, fell in with it.

Said Rogers: "It's a dead sure thing with my knowledge of the islands. I've got the mark to go for and the man—Byford's his name—and his island is Christopher Island, and it ain't a million miles from the Marquesas. I've known him since a boy. He's doing big business down on Christopher, and he's not tagged on to no firm. He plays a lone hand. There's dead loads of copra on that island, and Byford buys it from the natives. There's islands all round about, and he's got the pull of those. We'll most likely sell him the trade, half for copra and half for cash. We're not goin' to make a fortune on this one shot, but we're goin' maybe to lay the foundations of a big business. You with some money behind you, and me with the *Contra Costa and* the knowledge of the pitch ought to hit it off."

Slocum showing interest, they visited the schooner, which was lying at Rafferty's wharf unloading a cargo of copra, and the sight of her sealed the business as far as Slocum was concerned.

She was a beauty; designed by Daniels, her lines were an exhibition of the genius of that master shipwright. Ships of beauty and of worth are not built; they are born—created from the genius of their designers; they are things truly alive, and Slocum saw the life in the *Contra Costa* even as she lay moored to the wharf and fell in love with her. She had drawn him into this venture as much as the arguments of Rogers, who was now coming on deck rubbing the sleep out of his eyes.

Fully on deck now, the owner and master of the *Contra Costa* nodded at Setchell, the first mate, who was keeping the watch, swept the deck with a glance, taking in the figure of Slocum, the steersman, and the fellows forward hanging round the caboose, from which was coming a faint scent of breakfast in preparation. Then, having glanced at the binnacle card, he swept the horizon.

He was a lean, sick-looking man, with a face that all the sun and salt air of the Pacific could not bronze, and as he stood looking about him, Slocum, feeling his presence, turned.

The two captains gave each other good morning, and Rogers came to the weather rail.

"If this wind holds steady we ought to raise Christopher before long," said he. "We're doing all ten knots. Balmy, ain't it?"

He sniffed the warm wind, and filled his lungs with it.

"It's flyin'-fish weather," said Slocum; "we can't grumble at the weather; hope the tradin' will be as good."

Setchell drew up to the two others. He was undersized, and his face was one mass of freckles; his teeth were black with chewing, and he was the other self of Rogers; the two, to use Slocum's expression, were "as thick as treacle," and this glutinous attachment between the master and the mate did not please our ex-pirate. He was Rogers' partner, and he did not care for the idea that Setchell was Rogers' right hand and confidant. They would parade the deck together, talking, and they would take their grog together in the cabin talking, always talking—what

about he could not tell. He only knew that when he came on them suddenly their talk checked, and if he caught their renewed conversation it was always about the weather, or the working of the schooner. The thing was getting on his nerves.

"If this weather holds," said Setchell, "we'll have made a record run. I've never had better luck in the way of weather than this trip."

"Oh, blast the weather!" said Slocum. "You never can count on Pacific weather, and while you're rubbin' your hands over it a squall will maybe have the sticks out of her, and don't talk of luck; there ain't no such thing."

Setchell's good grammar and fine words were part of his present burden.

"No such thing as luck!" exclaimed Rogers. "Well, there I'm not with you. There ain't nothing else but luck in this blessed world. You ought to know that."

This implication of his bad luck through life, a fact about which he was quite open and on which he was garrulous at times, fired Slocum.

"Luck!" said he. "*I* ought to know! Why, all me life and time I've *seen* there's no such thing. It's only old women that talk of luck; it's not man's talk. I've no use for such bilge. What has luck to do with wind or weather? D'ye s'pose Gor A'mighty fans up a wind to help such skrimshankers as you an' me to diddle Kanakas outer copra with trade gin and condemned ammunition? My Sam! More like He'd sink us if He took notice of your chatter."

"Well, well, well," said Rogers, "there's no use in arguin' over questions like that; there's some that believe and some that doesn't—and here's breakfast, anyway."

A Kanaka was coming aft from the galley with a big dish of fried bacon and tomatoes; another was following him with the coffeepot. The whole crew of the *Contra Costa* were Kanakas; Slocum, Rogers, Setchell, and Ambrose, the second mate, being the only whites on board; and while the after guard were at breakfast in the cabin, and before Ambrose, the second mate, a perfectly fatuous individual, could be rousted out, a Kanaka stood watch. He was Sirloin Jim, so named for Heaven knows what reason, but a capable navigator when supervised, and a trustworthy when not in the near presence of drink.

Down below, Setchell was holding out his cup for a second helping of coffee when a far-away voice like the voice of a sea gull came on the warm wind blowing down the open saloon hatch.

It was the lookout hailing land.

Then the fatuous face of Ambrose appeared at the hatch.

"We're raising the island, sir."

"Good!" said Rogers. "I'll be on deck in a minute. I guess she'll keep."

He continued what he was saying to Slocum, and the latter, though he was now burning to be on deck, would not show his impatience, but sat listening and making answer till Setchell heaved himself up and led the way.

Yes, there was the island sure enough, and to be seen without the aid of glasses when they reached the deck, making little enough show amid all that waste of water, but steadily growing, as though the wind that was driving them toward it were spreading it open as one spreads apart the petals of a flower with one's breath.

An hour later and it was quite well defined, a mountainous island, green—green as the greenest emerald with the recent rains, and showing the smoke of a torrent like a white plume amid the cliff foliage.

A broken reef protected it from the full force of the sea.

It was a beautiful spot, and as they drew closer the beauty of it steadily grew before their eyes. The blazing

light of morning lay hazy about those high cliffs where from the ceiba and giant convolvulus, the hibiscus and mammea apple, and the earth still moist with the rains of a week ago, rose a vague, luminous haze wrapping the island like a scarf.

"It ain't bad to look at," said Slocum. "if one could tow it up to Frisco blest if one couldn't sell it for an oleograph. But it seems to me it's too durned pretty to make money out of —what's that you say? I'm not makin' no disparaging remarks, but I always mistrusts a smiling mug. I always mistrusts too much civility. You know the sort of chap that keeps washin' his hands as though he was born in a lav'tory, and smilin' as if his mother was a Cheshire cat—well, that sort of chap I've never met without bein' diddled. I'm not sayin' nothin' against this place, on'y that it seems to me too blame civil."

"I guess you've never seen it in a gale," said Rogers, "with the sea rearin' over that reef and the coconut trees thrashin' like whips; there you can see Byford's house beyond the beach and built up against the cliff; there's some native houses by it, but most of the natives live inland; did you ever see the like of the coconut trees, and they're only a sample; beyond, on the other side, where the slope is, it's one mass of them. Dead loads of copra."

He went forward to con the schooner in. There was a fellow in the bows swinging the lead, and every now and then his high-pitched voice mixed with the voices of the gulls clamoring on the reef.

The wind was fair for the reef opening, and Rogers seemed to know the passage by heart, and his directions came aft sure and certain and swift, while the fellows stood ready by the halyards.

Slocum, who had come forward, stood by, watching, as, with the wind spilling out of the sails, the schooner, like a stricken gull rising to the heave of the opening, came with the helm hard astarboard in a great curve over the glassy water of the lagoon.

Underneath them lay a garden of coral clearly visible as though seen through air, but Slocum had no eyes for its beauty. He was gazing shoreward at the white beach, desolate and burning in the sun, at the frame house of the trader that lay beyond the beach, and the native houses that lay near the main building, at the flagstaff from which no flag fluttered, at the canoes on the beach, so long drawn up that the wind had banked the sand against them.

The place seemed deserted. More than that, an indefinable atmosphere of desolation hung over it.

Like the little town on Keats' Greek urn, one felt that here the inhabitants would never come back, but there was no suggestion that, like the urn folk, they were held from returning by some pious festival. The scene suggested nothing of piety or festivity; blank desolation wandered on that beach. Desolation made all the more striking by the brilliancy of the sunshine, the whiteness of the sands, and the gay green of the cliff foliage, where the torrent, audible now, raced downward in a mist of spray.

The rumble tumble of the anchor chain came back in faint echoes from the cliffs, and the *Contra Costa*, swinging to her moorings, nosed round a bit as if to inspect the shore toward which she had been driven through so many days of azure and nights of stars.

"Well," said Slocum, with a sort of gloomy triumph in his tones, "where's your copra and where's your trader? Is this Christopher Island, or is it the bloomin' Garden of Eden? What price is fig leaves gettin' in the Frisco market? Or do you reckon to speculate on

snakes? An oleograph, that's what it is, and that's what I said it was."

"Don't crowd me," said Rogers. "It ain't my fault if the blinds are down; b'sides, where's the *sense* in it? Look at them trees; what's wrong with the trees? Stacks an' tons of copra to be had. The island's here; what's wrong with it? You take my word, the thing's sound. They've most likely changed over to live on the other side. Look at the canoes. They haven't left. Wouldn't be such fools as to leave the canoes behind 'em."

"No," said Setchell, who had come up to them, "the natives are here all right; besides, they couldn't have got away without the canoes, unless the place has been raided, and these are not the days for that sort of work. Bully Hayes has been in his coffin too long. My opinion is that they are all off copra gathering; it's inconceivable they have left, and it's equally inconceivable that they have suffered from some catastrophe."

"Well, let's cat—astrophy ashore and find out," said Slocum. "Lookin' and talkin' won't bring them—what boat are you taking?"

The *Contra Costa* carried a whaleboat and a ship's quarter boat; the latter was now lowered, a couple of Kanakas got in to row, and Slocum, Rogers, and Setchell crowded into the stern sheets. Ambrose, the second mate, remained to look after the schooner, and his vacuous face as he leaned over the rail gaped after them as they put off.

"That chap's enough to put the kibosh on any show," said Slocum; "onnatural, I call him. What's he want stickin' his calf's head over the rail to put a blight on us for? Blank ijit."

They beached the boat, and the precious trio crowded out. Slocum stamped on the hot, salt, white sand as if to make sure that he was truly on shore again, then he took a glance at the canoes lying warping in the sun, and then he led the way up the beach toward the house.

They had not gone twenty paces when a figure appeared at the open door of the house, came out on the veranda, and stood holding on to one of the main posts.

"Here's the sleepin' beauty," said Slocum, "and sick he looks."

"It's Byford!" said Rogers, catching his breath back, as well he might.

Byford was not pleasant to behold. Dressed in an old dirty drill suit that had once been white, he stood contemplating the oncomers with a look of serene detachment, like some pagan god standing at the door of its temple. His face was white, fish-belly white; his eyes were red-rimmed, and, though originally a stout man, he had fallen away from his stoutness.

"Stop!" said Rogers. "It's maybe some illness; better be careful. Hi, Byford! Don't you know me? I'm Rogers—what ails you? Is it anythin' 'fectious?"

"Hello, hello!" replied the figure. "Come along up; no call to be afraid. Gin—gin, nothing but gin, that's all that ails me." Then, as they got on the veranda: "I've been a bit on the razzle. Who's these gentlemen? Glad to see them; come in, all of you; the place is a bit put about, but you'll find seats."

He led the way in to the main room of the building. Once it had been a pleasant enough place. The floor was covered with matting, and there were half a dozen cane chairs standing about, a table stood in the center, the walls were adorned with canoe paddles and island headdresses, and, for the rest, it was a wilderness. Dust and dirt and cigarette ends lay about, a tomato tin had been cast in one corner, and there was a soul-searching, all-pervading smell of gin and paraffin lamps combined, enough to turn a man forever from drink and all that drink implies.

But Slocum, Rogers, and Setchell were, to use an expression of the former, "tough stuff," and when Byford fished a demijohn of square face out of a corner, glasses from a locker, and water from somewhere in the back premises, they did not refuse the invitation.

"This is better than better," said Byford as he paddled about getting the things. "I did think I'd never have the chance of a drink with a Christian again. You've come just in the nick of time to save me from myself. Not a soul in the blessed place but Rakatupea and his wife and her baby, and they aren't cheerful people, not by a long chalk. Rakatupea is the chief, the only one left of the whole caboodle."

"Look here!" said Rogers, filling his glass. "That's what I want to get at. What's the matter, anyway? What's gone with the natives?"

"What's gone with the natives?" said Byford, holding out a glass for Rogers to fill. "Why, didn't I tell you? The place has been swept by smallpox. Two months and more ago it came, and took the lot. You needn't be afraid of infection; this house is all right; nothing came here; it was the natives that got it all; every one of them gone but Rakatupea, his wife, and the baby."

"*Jumping* Moses!" said Slocum.

He was not afraid of smallpox; he had been through several epidemics unscathed; he was thinking of the trade goods lying in the hold of the *Contra Costa* and the time they had lost coming to this place to drink bad gin with a drink-soddened scalawag whose appearance was enough to frighten the Barbary Coast into sobriety.

"You needn't be a bit afraid," said Byford, gulping down his drink.

"Who's afraid?" said Slocum. "I'm thinkin' of the fool asses we've made of ourselves howking a shipload of trade all the way from Frisco to dump it on these blessed sands."

"Well, ain't I standin' in with you?" cried Rogers. "And am I complaining? Besides, is this the only island in the Pacific? Ain't there other places where business is to be done?" Then, turning to Byford: "You have no copra, have you?"

"Not a pound," said Byford almost cheerfully. "Cleaned the whole lot out before the epidemic came."

"Well," said Rogers, "see here! You'll be gettin' labor here presently, and you'll be wantin' goods; why not take our stuff?"

Byford began to laugh at this in a crazy sort of way. Then he rose to his feet and asked them to come out and see something. Chuckling all the time, he led them into the sunlight and along the beach to a godown close to the cliff wall. He opened the door of the storehouse. The place was crammed with goods—bales of cloth, stacks of tinned salmon, boxes of stick tobacco, cases of gin.

"The chaps hadn't been paid for their copra when the epidemic took them," said Byford, "but Saunderson, the chap that took the copra off, had paid me all right in cash. And to think of you coming with a full cargo and me with a full storehouse—why, it was like taking anthracite coal to Philadelphia."

"Or gin to a grogshop, where the lan'lord's on'y fit for a drunken 'sylum," put in Slocum, furious that this gin-soddened rascal should have the laugh of them. "Well, if that's all that's to be done here, I vote we up stick for somewhere that smells sweeter than this fortunit isle; let's get aboard."

But Rogers had other views. Walking beside Slocum on their way back to the house, he explained them.

"I saw an old deck of cards on the table in there," said he, "and since this chap has the money why shouldn't he part with some of it? He's got the bulge on us, and I propose to have the bulge on him if I've any luck."

"Luck!" said Slocum. "There you go again with your luck. If there was such a thing, would this be the time to try it? Luck your granny! You take my advice and let's put out before we're done worse. I don't like the look of this place, and didn't from the first. There was too much of the happy, smilin' angel about this place to suit yours trooly, too much of the hat and feathers and the happy face. Spoofed, that's what we've been, *and* to turn up such a guy as this chap Byford; he seems straight come out of that hymn the salvation blighters used to sing down Tollis Street, whose every aspect pleases and on'y man is vile. 'Strewth, he's vile, an' with a backin' of coconut trees an' smilin' verdure he'd draw the crowd at a missionary show; he'd beat cannibals."

"He's gone to pieces with the drink, that's all," said Rogers. "Shocked I was to see him, an old friend, rejuiced like that, and me expectin' to trade with him. Well, if I can't diddle him one ways I'll do it another; it's not to be trade, it seems. Well, let it be gamblin'."

They entered the house again, Slocum grumbling. Now the captain was not a drinking man under ordinary circumstances, but when his nerves were put about, or, to use his own expression, when he had something on his spine, drink became a dangerous temptation to him, and now, as he entered the house of Byford, seeing the gin on the table, he helped himself to a glass as though the place were his own. This was his second glass of gin in the course of half an hour, and he had eaten nothing since breakfast.

Rogers picked up the cards from the table, toyed with them lightly, took his seat, and laid them out in a pattern on the table with his horny thumb, and then, in the most natural way in the world, suggested a game of poker to Setchell.

These two scamps seemed telepathic in their understanding with one another, for Setchell, falling in with the idea, addressed Byford, asking him to join them.

But Byford, despite his condition of mind and body, was much too cautious a bird to be caught by such amateur fowlers. He excused himself on account of the state of his health; he was not in a fit state to play cards; he had eaten nothing since yesterday, nothing but two nabisco wafers and a tomato. "If I had a beefsteak inside me I wouldn't stand out," said Mr. Byford, "but I've made it the rule of my life never to play cards on an empty stomach—and there it stands."

He rolled himself a cigarette, and Slocum, bursting into a laugh, clapped his great thigh with his palm. "He's got you again," said he. "Won't trade, won't play, unless it's with the gin bottle. There! Get into the corner with your tomarter tin, you crazy, good-for-nuthin' and gimme the cards."

He came to the table. Anger with Byford, anger with Setchell, anger with Rogers, all were mixed in his mind with the fumes of gin and the lust of play. He wanted to make money out of some one, to get back something of the time and energy he had lost in coming to this outrageous place. In his cool moments he did not play cards; a dozen times on the voyage down here Rogers or Setchell had proposed a game with him, but he had always refused. Now Circumstance had him in her grip, and, pouring out another glass of gin, he sat him down before the spoilers.

Byford, looking injured at being called a crazy good-for-nothing, sat back in his cane chair, blowing smoke at the ceiling.

As the game began, two figures darkened the doorway, the figure of Rakatupea and his dark-skinned wife, who, with their baby, constituted the sole remainder of the population of this

once fortunate island. The baby was not with them; they had left it outside.

Rakatupea and his wife, an exceedingly gloomy-looking brace of Kanakas, took their seats in cane chairs near Byford without one single word. It was more like the entry of a pair of dogs than of a pair of human beings; and Byford, who had now fallen into a mused state, after the first glance, took no notice of them.

The chief and his wife smoked cigarettes of their own making, and over the card players now the air was hazy with smoke made blue by the brilliant light from the outside world through the open doorway.

Slocum was winning. In a moment his bad temper had vanished and his gloomy view of things. Inflated by gin and success, his mind began to soar, his language to take a jubilant tone.

They were playing for comparatively small stakes, and they continued so for a while, Slocum always winning; then, feeling fortune at his back, he proposed an increase. Rogers and Setchell at once took him, the game was resumed, and then the luck began to wabble.

Slocum lost, won, lost, and then lost again. He grew angry, grew cool, swore frightfully when he lost, and produced some of the newest and most curious and quaintest oaths when he won.

At the end of an hour and a half, he had lost two thousand dollars.

Had you told him in the morning that such a thing was possible he would have laughed at you, but there it was, two thousand precious dollars gone, swept clean away and nothing to show for it.

They were not, of course, playing now with coin on the table. They made notes of their winnings and losings, using chips made of torn-up paper for counters.

"Well, there's no gainsaying your luck is out, captain," said Setchell. "I think you said this morning there was no such thing as luck. Well, what do you say to this?"

"If you'll close your head and hand me the cards I'll show you," said the other. "My deal."

To give up, to make no attempt to recapture his losses, to take defeat lying down, would have been a violation of his nature.

Very grim, and breathing heavily through his nose, the redoubtable captain dealt the cards, and the game proceeded.

Outside now, from the beach blazing in the hot afternoon sun a sound came, insistent, monotonous, and teasing. It was the chief Rakatupea's baby beating on an empty tomato tin with a lump of coral.

Byford was asleep with his mouth open, and the flies were promenading on his face without exciting a twitch, just as they might have promenaded on the face of a marble statue. The Chief Rakatupea and his wife continued smoking, moving, whenever they moved, like automatic figures, and Slocum continued losing.

The tide would turn for a few minutes, and then when just beginning to flood would ebb again, leaving him more stranded than before.

At the end of another hour his total losses amounted to four thousand five hundred dollars.

"I reckon I'll stop," said the captain. "I've lost the worth of all the trade in the hold of that blessed schooner, all but five hundred dollars; I reckon I'll keep that to pay my way back to Frisco and take a cab to the nearest lunatic 'sylum. I ain't grumbling, Sam Slocum's not the man to take his losses grumbling—not him."

He was trying to conceal his breakdown. He would not help himself to more gin for fear that the shaking of

his hand might be noticed. He took it well, for the loss meant everything to him, but he wanted to get out of that place and be by himself for a moment, and this opportunity was given to him by the Chief Rakatupea's baby.

That lusty infant, having paused for a while to naturalize over a stray crab, had resumed operations with the tomato tin and the lump of coral.

"Durn that child!" said the captain. "I'll go out and stop its row; no sense in a row like that—I'll be back in a minute."

He went out, and as he cleared the veranda he heard Setchell laughing. It only wanted that to make his fury blaze out, and the sight of the baby before him, like a chocolate-colored football on the sands, did not help to soothe him. He came toward it as if he were going to kick it into the sea.

The baby, seeing the man approach, dropped the lump of coral and held up the tomato tin to show it to him. It was a gorgeous tin, the very latest product of American publicity art and commercial endeavor, but it did not appease Captain Slocum.

"Shut your noise!" cried he. "Whacher want makin' that row for, whacher——"

A roar like the roar of a hundred thousand lions cut him short, a huge bowlder the size of a hardware crate skipped past him playfully in a shower of sand, and an artu tree, roots over leaves, came flying after the bowlder.

The captain swung round. The whole cliff face had fallen. Eighty feet of raw, red earth stood clean cut above a mound forty feet high, a mound of rock and earth and rubble, broken trees, and torn-up bushes. The recent rains had undermined the cliff face; under the pile of débris lay the house of Byford and all that it contained, flattened, smashed to matchwood, and covered thirty feet deep by rocks, trees, earth, and rubble.

Captain Slocum, unconscious of the baby screaming at his feet, stood staring at the ruin before him. Then he ran toward it, shouting, and, to use the words of Ambrose, who was watching from the schooner, carrying on like a lunatic.

He seized a tree trunk and tried to lift it. Then he came to his senses; as well try to assist the unfortunates buried under the ruins of Herculaneum. Byford and his crew were beyond the reach of man, part now of the foundations of the island, and destined to remain so till the sounding of the last trump.

His own salvation was rushing in on him; by two minutes he had been saved from all that, by two minutes, and the baby of the Chief Rakatupea.

He walked back along the sands in a dazed way, picked up the child, and came down to the sea edge with it, holding it in his arms. It had ceased crying, and lay still as a frightened rabbit while he stood waiting for the boat that had put off from the *Contra Costa*.

It was the quarter boat, which had put back to the schooner after landing them that morning, and Ambrose was steering. When the boat's nose touched the sand, Ambrose scrambled out and came wading ashore.

"What's up with the cliff?" said Ambrose.

"Up with the cliff!" cried the captain. "What's down with it, you mean. Can't you see! Where's your eyes? The whole caboodle of them's under there—Rogers and Setchell and Byford and two Kanakas, the whole population of the blessed island."

Ambrose tilted his cap and scratched his head.

"And who's captain of the schooner now?" said he.

"Captain?" replied Slocum. "I guess I'm captain and owner, too, since Rogers hasn't kith or kin; and he'd

cleaned me out of the trade on board over a game of cards—I reckon that's mine, too. I guess I've fallen on luck. Never did believe in it, but there's no goin' against facts."

"What are you doing with that thing?" asked Ambrose, his eyes turning to the child.

"Oh, *get* aboard and close your questions—what d'you expect me to do—leave it behind or fling it into the sea, and fling me luck after it? Why, you double-dashed imige, d'you know what's in front of you right there, untouched by the cliff fall—there's a storehouse full of trade."

Ambrose glanced at the godown, which, in fact, was still standing, untouched, to westward of the fall, without quite comprehending its connection with the baby.

"We'll put it aboard and then come back for as much of the trade as we can find room for," said the captain.

They rowed off to the schooner, the child on Slocum's knee. It was plump and attractive, like most Kanaka babies of a year old, but paler in color as if from a mixture of European blood; but, unlike them, too, it wore a serious expression that seemed the natural habit of its countenance.

"It's like a blessed Billikin," said Ambrose, "only it's wanting the grin."

"And you're like a blessed monkey, only you're wanting the tail," replied Slocum. "It's my luck, and I'd thank you to make no observations about it."

"I thought you said you didn't believe in luck," replied the other, hurt in his feelings and wishing to make a retort

"Just so, me son," replied the captain, clutching his prize under one arm while he prepared to climb the companionway, "but, you see, I hadn't a hold of it then. Touchin' is believin', and don't you forget that."

The second story in this series, which is entitled "The Encounter With Keller," will appear in the December 7th issue of the POPULAR.

MYSTERY

If a poll were taken of the kind of stories most popular with men, probably there would be a close race for position among lovers of mystery stories, Western stories, and sea stories. If you belong to a mystery-loving class don't miss the December 7th POPULAR. The complete novel in that issue centers around a mystery that involves a man in a New York restaurant, a wealthy Russian and his daughter, and an uncanny Unknown who figures as "Number One." Most of the action takes place in the outposts of Canada. The author of this striking mystery novel is

ALAN SULLIVAN

The Man Who Couldn't Get a Job

By Frederick Niven

Author of "Hands Up," "Lost Cabin Mine," Etc.

"The right to work," as insisted upon by an imaginative job seeker who finds himself stranded in an almost jobless town tucked away in a fold of the Sierras

WHEN Mack arrived in Eureka —the last city of that name —he believed that he had come to his own Eureka. It was evening, a blue and serene mountain evening, and the little town was infectiously astir. Its one main thoroughfare—Dawson Street—was all a-joggle with humanity, as if Eureka were not a town, but a fair.

"She"—Mack called Eureka "she," in the manner of his roving kind—captivated him. Men had just suppered, and were physically content; the last mosquito hawks were still zigzagging overhead, for though Dawson Street was in shadow, and the lamps were alight. the last glow of day still illumined the surrounding peaks. A witching glamour was on the dusty street, and upon the faces of those whose heels hammered slow on the thronged sidewalks.

Mack accepted the hotel to which the first hotel rig that claimed him carried him. The driver seemed determined that Mack should be his, and he made no protest. Even the swish of the horses' long tails seemed a matter worthy of note. Eureka fascinated him. Here he was—and there was no denying that he was—in the spell of a new town. He had read the Boosts of Eureka, and here *he* was, and here *she* was, hardly a season old, tucked away in this fold among the sierras—the rich sierras, where gold strikes had recently been made well worth the while of opening up. Up there, somewhere, in these crests, where the last glow now abruptly went out, were the famous mines—the Ophir and the This-is-It. Up there, also, were prospectors looking for more ophirs, or hunting round for shows of mineral that would warrant the ejaculation from them of "This is *it,* too!" At least, they would be in camp now, at this precise moment, but they were up there, nevertheless. From the veranda of the Gold House, Mack could see a twinkle like a star that had dropped a little way from the sky, and rested in the shadowed mountain.

"Is that the light of the Ophir, or the This-is-It?" he asked some one.

"No—I expect that is a prospector's camp," he was told. "You can't see the Ophir and This-is-It from here. They're over the crest. At least, you can't see the lights in the bunk house. During the day, from the end of Dawson Street, you can just make out—if you know where to look for it—a puff of steam now and then from the pumping engine at the Ophir. The This-is-It is over the crest altogether."

"So?" said Mack, put his heels on the veranda rail, and, having lifted his eyes to the looming mountains with admiration for a spell, dropped them to observe the street below. The hum of talk and laughter went on from end to end of Eureka. She was, he felt, a live new town.

But—the tariff at the Gold House was three dollars a day,.or, for a week, cut rate, eighteen dollars. So, at the end of two days, he left the Gold House and went round to First Avenue to a boarding house there, where the tariff was twelve dollars per week, or, cut rate, if one slept in a double-bedded room, ten dollars per week. Mack moved because he had arrived in Eureka with only twenty dollars, and because—despite the lively appearance of the town—he couldn't get a job.

Loughlin, owner of this boarding house, had jumped into Eureka at her beginning, had bought half a dozen town lots—some of which he was holding, some of which he had already sold—had also a share in a prospect in the mountains, and had started the boarding house as a stand-by while waiting for Eureka to go ahead. But his opinion of the place leaked out to Mack upon the second evening of Mack's sojourn under his roof.

Most of the boarders were "downtown;" that is, they were round the corner, in the next street—Dawson—playing poker at the West End, or listening to the Salvation Army open-air performance at the East End, or strolling to and fro, talking town lots and eating cherries. Mack, alone on the veranda, sat listening to the blent music of the band of the Salvation Army and of the town band, which was serenading a newly arrived company promoter at the Grand Hotel, a man who, it was hoped, would believe in Eureka enough to start another mine a-going, and open up a smelter. Out onto the veranda came Loughlin.

"Good evening!" said he. "How does it go?"

Mack moved his cigar.

"Good evening!" he responded; but how it went he did not say.

Loughlin sat down, and softly he inquired: "Got a job?"

"Nope!" said Mack, with a definite nod.

"And tried?" asked Loughlin sympathetically.

"And tried, sure," said Mack.

There was a pause, and then Loughlin, after sitting comfortably and tilting his chair, and saying, "Thanks—I don't mind," to the cigar proffered by Mack, cleared his throat.

"I've heard it said," he commented, "that the way to make good in a new town is to look around and see what is wanted in that town and not supplied—and then to supply it."

"Yes," said Mack, with a dry reservation in his mind—that one needs capital to do that, and that what some people want is just a job. It was only a personal reservation, however; he did not voice it.

"Well, sir," said Loughlin, "so far as I can see there is no scope for any one in Eureka. She has hotels at all prices; she has so many that some are liable to shut down because provisions are at boom prices, and there ain't no real boom. Eureka has all the superficial appearance of boom if——" he hesitated.

"If you arrive after sundown, and see the crowds of people," suggested Mack.

"That's right," agreed Loughlin. "But if you go along Dawson during the day you get a different impression. For every man at work there are three watching him—envious. Up at the Ophir and the This-is-It certificated miners are working as muckers, hoping for another prospect to open up rather than move elsewhere. This country is all rocks—there's no sand bars here for placer mining. Do you think this fellow"—and he waved a finger in the direction whence came the town band's music—"will open a smelter here? No, sir—not for a long time, anyhow. He's only here to make a splash, so as to attract buyers for his own town lots. He

has pocketfuls. He is, of course, helping all of us that have lots for sale—that is, if we can catch the buyers that he brings along. But he's got a heap to make out of Eureka before he begins doing anything for Eureka. That's capital! What about the others—without capital? What about the hotels, boarding houses, livery stables, general stores, ironmongery, barber parlors, fruit stalls, book and drug stores, soft drink and candy stores, photographers—cabinet size and stamp size—skittle alley, tobacco stores? Where's the opening for stores and so forth? And as for jobs—carpenters have finished about all Eureka will want in the building way for a long spell, now; there's too much built already. Street workers? Her sidewalks are all down, her blocks are cleared. Oh, I'm not *knocking* Eureka—she's all right, but overdone! All I say at the moment is that I've heard it said that the way to make good in a new town is to look around and see what is most wanted, and not supplied and——" he gave a little grunt. Some of his boarders were in arrears, and, though he let them stay on, he was doubtful if all would, eventually, get jobs and pay up. "I think what is most wanted in Eureka is jobs!" and he chuckled sadly. "Or should I say *are* jobs? The big majority of the folks here want a job, and they can't get a job—that's all that's to it."

The arrival of a prospective boarder with a roll of blankets and a suit case called the proprietor away; and, left alone once more, Mack pondered the talk he had listened to. It depressed him a trifle, but he did not thrust it aside in his mind. He allowed it to stay—and then, suddenly, he had light, brought down his chair from the tilt, a notion advertising its arrival in the dancing of his eyes, and—walking smartly and businesslike—he set off into the stir of Eureka with its crowds, chatter, lights, haze of cigar smoke, rubadub of heels, band music, gramaphone songs, and all the rest of it.

II.

"Two days at the Gold House equal to six dollars," he meditated. "Cigars equal one dollar—total seven dollars. Seven dollars from twenty equals thirteen," and he turned over his bills. He had only ten left—what the other three had gone on he could not recall. His mental ledger was usually like that; but this lapse of the bookkeeper he promptly condoned, having other affairs on hand interesting all his staff.

"What is wanted in this go-ahead city," he said to himself, "is, as Loughlin says, a job. There is a tremendous demand for jobs, far exceeding the supply."

He was now in Dawson Street, projecting himself along with forceful, swinging strides, and he remarked to himself, walking westward, how well supplied was Eureka in other ways.

"Yes," thought he, counting three fruit stores, "Loughlin was right. There's competition in Eureka in most lines, and here's one field utterly untouched. What!" For a great placard across a window announced: "These premises will shortly be opened by the Bargain Hardware Ironmongery Company." "Another hardware store! And in the rooms above it are three dentists! Competition in every field—and the one thing wanted in this town is not supplied: jobs."

So ruminating, he entered a door on the lintel of which was the legend: "H. Markheim, Real Estate, Land, Mines, Houses bought and sold."

"How do you do?" said Mr. Markheim, behind the counter, laying down his cigar.

"How do you do?" said Mack. "I've come to see you about a shack that I notice you have to let just above the depot. It has been empty for some time, and, though it's not what could

be called central, it's about the size I want. What's the rent?"

"That building?" asked Markheim. "No, it's not central, but it's the first building that a man sees coming up from the depot, which makes up for its lack of centrality. It is, therefore, not depreciated by lack of centrality, for what it loses in that way it gains by being seen by everybody."

"Oh, I don't know," said Mack. "I seem to see it differently. I almost missed that shack myself when I arrived, for I was looking on up the hill into town. It might have been just a bowlder by the roadside."

"Well, sir, it's right handy for the depot, ain't it? It is a building I have on my books as 'close proximity to depot'—I make a point of that. What it loses in centrality it gains in that, too—it is easy of access. The rent is forty dollars a month."

"That will be thirty, then," said Mack.

"Oh, no!"

"You can't let it," said Mack. "It has been vacant ever since I came to Eureka."

"How long have you been here, sir?"

"Four days," answered Mack, with a bland smile.

"You can have it for thirty-five," said Markheim.

"All right—give me the key."

"You don't want to go in right now, do you?"

"Sure. I'll get the place in order to-night. You can draw up the agreement," and Mack took eight dollars seventy-five from his pocket. "Here's a week's rent in advance as a guarantee of good faith."

Markheim found the key, and handed it over.

"What's the name?" he asked.

"John Mackenzie—I'm at the Loughlin House, First Avenue."

"I'll give you a receipt for this."

"Oh, that's all right," said Mack. "You can have it for me to-morrow when I come in to sign your agreement."

He had a faint doubt amid his hopefulness—and he wished to establish an easy, a nonchalant way of treating the business. If he couldn't trust Markheim for twelve hours with a receipt, Markheim would be less likely to be easy over collecting rent when rent was due; and Mack was just a shade uncertain of his scheme, the scheme that had brought his chair down from the tilt so triumphantly a quarter of an hour ago.

In the Eureka Book and Drug Store he purchased two sheets of cardboard —ten cents each—and a small pot of ebony stain—twenty-five cents; a brush —twenty-five cents—eight drawing pins —ten cents—and returned through a Dawson Street more glamorous than ever to his boarding house. His roommate was afield, and he had solitude in the little summer-heated room, coat off, to inscribe, in careful print—with tongue, though he knew it not, rhythmically wagging to and fro as he worked—upon one card:

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE PREMISES?

THE EUREKA EMPLOYMENT AGENCY OPENS HERE TO-MORROW.

COME EARLY TO AVOID THE DOOR JAMB.

The other card he kept in its pristine state.

The black stain dried fairly quickly, though it seemed not to dry quickly to Mack. At last, with dusk creeping on the "city," he set off to his new premises and pinned up his printed card upon the top panel of the door, then stepped back to admire the effect. The landlord could not object, he considered, to this notice being here to-night, a mere mentioning of the bald fact that the shack—which Mack now called

"premises"—would be opened next day. Mack was possessed of a deep-set belief that he would have to perform the operation known as "getting busy" right speedily. This was the speediest beginning he could think of. He stood back on the sidewalk's edge, admiring his heralding handiwork while the arc lights of Eureka flickered and sizzled up, and the mystic blue haze of night drew over all.

And as he surveyed his sign there advanced along the sidewalk a hefty specimen of humanity with slow, indefatigable stride, odd blend of weight and litheness, and looked at the piece of cardboard. Mack, at that moment, had come to the decision that it was a hair's breadth off the straight, and he stepped forward to adjust it more mathematically; then he stood back a few paces again, acting much as does an artist who walks forward, and backs away, before his canvas. The hefty one, lingering, gave voice.

"Are you the proprietor?" he asked, and indicated the "premises" with the glowing end of his weed.

"I am, sir," said Mack.

"Well," said the hefty one, "I've been looking for you. It seemed strange to me to see a town so full of men and no employment agency. My name is Candlass. You may have heard of me."

Mack bowed—adroitly. It might mean: "How do you do, Mr. Candlass?" Or it might mean: "Who has not heard of you?"

"I've just arrived here to get busy on a timber job, and I want thirty men."

Mack was on the point of saying: "You can get three hundred by raising your voice an octave higher," when he checked himself. There was a look in Mr. Candlass' eye of something like wireless telegraphy. Mack, as it were, popped his operator into his own wireless station—and received the message.

"I intended to make my charge on opening day," said he, "one dollar. But if it is timber men you're after, I think I'll make it two."

"And you still have your dollar," said Candlass, as if talking to the sign.

There was no more to be said. Mack produced his pot and brush from his coat pocket, and, propping the card at an angle between chest and crooked left arm, he added:

WANTED:
A LIMITED NUMBER OF EXPERIENCED LUMBERJACKS.

Candlass nodded.

"That gives me every right to fire them at the end of a week if they ain't experienced," he remarked.

Mack gave his deliberate bow, and commented: "And put the suggestion of not playing the game upon the shoulders of such gentlemen without any kick."

"And then I want some carpenters," said Candlass. "Maybe a dozen."

Mack inclined his head, and wrote again upon the card, gently wagging his tongue:

EXPERIENCED CARPENTERS.

Then, brush in air, he remarked: "That means you want a cook, and a cook's assistant and a couple of hash slingers."

"Go right ahead," assented Candlass.

"I got to print smaller," said Mack; and continued:

ALSO OPENINGS FOR COOKS AND WAITERS.

Candlass, while Mack thus toiled, advanced to the window and looked in, putting his face close so as to see into the dark interior, shading his eyes with his hands from the lamp glow without.

"Guess you want a table and a chair," he remarked, "a ledger and a pot of ink. I see you got a counter. But a counter alone don't make a place look altogether slap-up and imposing."

"The furniture's coming around tonight," said Mack. "Might I have the pleasure of liquidating with you now to seal our deal?"

"Guess it's about supper time," said Candlass. "I've just been strolling through this progressive city looking for you—and now that I've found you let the apéritif be on me."

III.

"Mr. Loughlin, could you do me a favor?" said Mack. "Could you lend me, for one day only, a table, a chair, armchair preferred, a pot of ink, a penholder, nib included, and—and—er—let me see——" he paused, considering what else he required, desirous to get the whole, not at all easy, request made in one installment.

"And a waste-paper basket," suggested Loughlin, "also the loan of a six-shooter, in case the scheme falls through. But what is it, anyhow? You can have them free, in return for allaying my curiosity."

"I'll tell you," said Mack. "It is really up to me to tell you. You said to me: 'I've heard it said that the way to make good in a new town is to look around and see what is wanted in that town—and supply it.'"

"And you've discovered *that!*" exclaimed the proprietor.

"Not I," said Mack. "You did. Wherefore, it is all the more up to me to inform you of my reason for getting up the necessary gall to ask you for this outfitting loan. I think, indeed, it is up to me to offer you a commission when the books are balanced at the end——"

"Don't mention it. My curiosity rises. I guess the news of your design is enough."

"Well, you said further," went on Mack, "that what is most wanted in Eureka is jobs. So I'm opening an employment agency."

Loughlin began to grin.

"What's the joke?" said Mack.

"Well, sir," and Loughlin chuckled more, "if you don't see the joke, the only excuse I can think of for you is that you've been hunting a job yourself so long that you've got the facet of humor rubbed off you. You can't get a job for yourself—and you're setting up to get jobs for other people!"

Mack began to chuckle, too. He chuckled, indeed, all the way down to the "premises," carrying a table on his back, and going thither across rearward lots so as not to bump into the prospective job hunters that again thronged the main street in their evening constitutional. About five minutes later, he was back in the boarding house, where the generous Loughlin was getting ready the rest of the necessary effects. The proprietor, who was coming "downtown" to do some shopping for the morrow, accompanied him with a hanging lamp in one hand and the inkpot in the other, still chuckling, in a mood approaching levity.

"Why! You ain't going down across lots!" he said, seeing where the laden Mack was heading.

Mack, under his load—old, repolished armchair, old and battered waste-paper basket on one of its upturned legs—looked a question.

"No, sir!" said Loughlin vehemently. "Great is the power of advertisement," and abruptly and definitely he turned round the corner for Dawson Street. At every sign of a bump he clearly ejaculated: "Pardon, gents. Make way, gents, for the employment-agency furniture." On he went, a few paces in the lead, beaming, lamp dangling—with his chuckle and a happy aspect that made the passers-by smile responsive as he intoned: "Excuse me! This gentleman has a jag of furnichur on—outfitting the employment agency. Make way for the employment-agency furnichur!"

There was nothing for it, when the

furniture arrived, but to light the lamp; this because a cue had already formed. It was not a rude cue. It pretended not to be a cue. It pretended to be strolling thus far westward beyond the area of stores by accident, or by the call of the balmy air of evening; but even as Loughlin got the lamp a-going, yes—even before it had ceased swinging from the hook to which it was suspended—there were men without, at the halt, reading the notice on the closed door.

"What's the matter with opening tonight?" said Loughlin, steadying the lamp with a hand.

Mack stepped to the door, and, opening it, surveyed his handiwork on the sheet of cardboard, then unfixed it, laid it on the window sill within, produced his brush and black stain, and, in small, but very thick capitals, he painted beneath the notice already blazoned:

NOW OPEN, AHEAD OF TIME.

And he did not return the board to the door, but stuck it up in the window where all might read. They came in one by one and were interviewed somewhat thus:

"Good evening! How do you do?"

"Good evening! How do you do?"

"What can I do for you?"

"About those lumber jobs."

"Lumberman?"

"Bet your life!"

"Experienced?"

"Sure!"

"Well, you can have the job, if you are experienced. The only men who will get me into trouble are the inexperienced. I can't inquire into the past life and labors of every gentleman who comes in here, you know. But I've promised to supply only experienced men—I've given my promise. I'm too polite to doubt any gentleman's word. What is the name, sir? I will make out your note to the employer—thank you—at the Delmonico Hotel door tomorrow afternoon—after lunch. That will be two dollars, please." He ran all this together; and if there was sign of hesitancy he added, easily but abruptly: "Dollars refunded here if by any chance you don't sign on."

By nine o'clock the thirty experienced lumbermen were supplied with their notes, and sixty dollars reposed in Mack's pocket—also fifteen carpenters had departed, each with a slip indorsed by Mack, and their thirty dollars rustled the wad in Mack's pocket up to ninety.

"Pardon me a minute," he said to one who entered, and, rising, he took down his card and marked out the demand for lumbermen, annotating it neatly: "Demand for the moment supplied." This obliteration, and mere hint of future possibilities, did not vex the newcomer. He heaved a sigh of relief, and commented: "Ah! I thought it was the chef that was gone."

"Chef still open," said Mack. "The job is to cook for forty-five men—wages three and a half a day; assistant supplied. Fee two dollars."

"Oh, I don't pay till I get the job."

"Sorry, sir. I perfectly trust you. but I don't know you. I'm located here, and you can come around any time and find me. I refund the dollars if the job, by any chance, at the last moment, doesn't—er—matriculate—er—materialize, that is to say. I make no charge for entering names—I keep no register in which to enter names, and ask a fee for doing that, as the manner of some is. If I haven't a job, I tell you so. If I have, I give you a note to your prospective employer; and I'm not here to skin anybody. But I can't go around collecting fees, after jobs are secured, from gentlemen who might—through press of other matters—forget me. I can make out no note to any prospective employer without an exchange of two dollars from the prospective employee. Bring me back the

note, crossed 'N. G.' and signed, and the two dollars slides back into your pocket, and the slip into my w. p. b." And he glanced at the waste-paper basket and gave a little nod to Loughlin, who was standing in a corner trying to look as if he wasn't there, and wasn't amused.

The cook had his slip and Mack had his two dollars. By ten o'clock the thirty lumbermen, the fifteen carpenters, the cook, and two waiters had dropped into Mack's pocket the sum of ninety-six dollars. He brought his feet down from the table and rose from his chair.

"Well, sir," he said, "before the *assistant* cook arrives," and he carefully divided his dollars, forty-eight in a pocket to right, forty-eight in a pocket to left. "Come along, sir," and out went the lamp, and he and the chuckling Loughlin slipped into the air. Without a word, they drifted eastward, but just as they departed a young man arrived before the closed agency, and said: "Too late?"

"No, sir," responded Mack, turning back. "Always open for a deal. What can I do for you?"

"I am an experienced cook."

Mack put a kindly hand upon the young man's shoulder.

"I'm right sorry," he said; "the only thing I have left in that line is assistant cook—called by some dishwasher—wages two and a half."

One or two others, late comers, had arrived, and now stopped, hung back, eyes on the trio. They drew aside; they just faintly heard the young man say: "Look here, I'm broke—and I hear you charge two dollars for a job. If I give you my word to bring you the two dollars first pay day——"

Mack felt a great magnitude within him, a pity for all poor fellows out of a job. He put his hand in his pocket and extracted two dollars.

"I'll lend it you," he said. "Come around in the morning and see me. You can owe me that privately. I'm not allowed to give the job without payment, for it's a square firm—and if at the last moment the job to which you receive our note does not materialize, the two dollars is refunded. But we have to protect ourselves against dishonesty; so we have our rule, to which we strictly adhere. It is the method in all our branches over these United States of America, in our Canadian branches, and is even practiced by our Mexican representatives. If the job doesn't materialize for any reason, our method is this—return us the slip marked 'N. G.' and indorsed by the employer who, at the eleventh hour, didn't employ, and the two dollars is refunded."

"Well, you're a white man," said the young man. "I assure you I'll not forget——"

"Don't mention it. I'm not so old but I can recall the day when I, too, felt things tight, when two dollars—not to put too fine a point upon it—meant more to me than—well, ninety-six, or, at least, forty-eight does tonight. Good night, sir! Come around after breakfast."

The others who had dallied seemed averse to calling back a man after business hours. But what they had overheard put him high in their esteem—and they would spread it for him through Eureka. One hailed him in a tentative fashion: "Any railroad jobs going, sir?"

Loughlin suddenly chipped in.

"I guess there will be," he answered; "look in to-morrow morning."

They moved on, and Mack quietly said: "Now, what in thunder makes you hopeful of railroad jobs?"

"Ssh! He's coming after you. Didn't you see who that was who strolled up while we were speaking to the kid?"

"No."

"Well, don't look round."

"Not going to. I'm wise to-night—I feel wonderful wise."

"Railroad superintendent. That's who it was. And if I can read the expression in a man's eyes he's got a deal at the back of his eyes that he'll lay gently before you at the first opportunity."

Mack nodded his head.

"Half a minute," he said. "I'm just going in here to pay for the shack. Come in with me—I won't detain you two ticks."

Loughlin's only reply was a laugh deep in his chest.

"Well, sir," said Mack, entering the estate man's office that was still open, "I've begun business, and——"

"So I hear!"

"And it's up to me to let you know. You said thirty-five a month. If you make it twenty-five you can have cash down right now."

"Um! Now you know you only got that key to prepare the place. And I hear you've started business. And I've got your agreement drawn out with to-morrow's date. Well—say twenty-five then."

"Good!" and Mack counted out sixteen dollars and a quarter, which he laid down on the counter.

"Sixteen," said the estate man, "sixteen-twenty-five, and eight dollars seventy-five earlier—that's right. I'll just give you the receipt, and you can sign the agreement."

On the agreement were, as they say, no flies; it was wholly wholesome and normal; and Mack signed, pocketed the receipt, and came forth into the street again muttering.

"What's that?" asked Loughlin.

"Oh, I was just saying forty-eight, minus two to that dead-broke kid, equals forty-six; and forty-six, minus sixteen-twenty-five, equals twenty-nine-seventy-five. And twenty-nine-seventy-five minus your commission——"

"No, sir!" Loughlin broke in. "I've enjoyed myself enough without that. Besides, you'll soon owe me boarding, which will bring it down some."

"Well—twenty-nine-seventy-five is pretty good in one day."

"Twenty-nine a day! My dear sir," cried Loughlin, "there's more than that to it! You don't pay a month's rent every two hours. It wasn't forty-eight you drew in—it was double; it was ninety-six—and *in two hours!*"

"Yes—but I'm laying aside half, and pretending to myself that I don't get it."

Loughlin nodded his head gently several times.

"I see you don't need me to post you on how to come to an understanding with the railroad superintendent," said he.

"By the way, where is he?" asked Mack.

"On the other side. Guess he'll sleuth you home to see where you're stopping, and call later."

"Well," said Mack, "I've to see a gentleman at the Delmonico first, to tell him to put N. G. on anything unsuitable, and send them back to me."

"Was that invented as you went along?"

Mack nodded.

"I enjoyed your inventions," said Loughlin. "All right—see you later," and, laughing, Loughlin went off to do his shopping, while Mack passed aside to the Delmonico to see Candlass. On the way he was smitten with a sudden dread. Was Candless *straight?* Himself so lately on the perilous edge, and only saved by a sudden inspiration, it occurred to him that Candless might have been in similar predicament, and have been somewhat similarly inspired to invent his mission to Eureka and need for men and half-share scheme. Horrible thought! Perhaps Mack's cardboard jogged Candless as Loughlin's grumble jogged Mack! But here was the Delmonico—Candlass' hotel.

IV.

And as this is not a story of suspense, you may as well know that the sudden doubt in Mack's mind was groundless. Candlass was not that kind of man. He was truly in Eureka to oversee the opening up of a timber limit. Only he didn't see why, if there happened to be an employment agent in Eureka, he should not make a little himself on employing the men. Over a cocktail, in a humorous fashion, at the Delmonico, he put his case to Mack, smiling whimsically the while.

The interview with Candlass over, and Candlass richer by forty-eight dollars, Mack passed out again into glamorous Eureka; and there was Loughlin, bundle of provisions under his arm, hovering in wait for him, advancing on him abruptly, with a furtive: "Say! I forgot all about it. Give me that key, and you go on to the boarding house."

"What's the trouble?"

"There's a town fee for opening up business—five dollars. The town clerk is on to you—I heard in the grocery store. I'm going back to cut off that addenda you made on the foot of your notice and stick it up afresh same as it was—setting forth that you start to-morrow—so's to help you save the fine for starting up without license. Town office is shut now, but if you go around in the morning and register I guess the town clerk will send down a kid clerk with you to see the place formally, and he'll take the face value of your notice. Lucky old Markheim valued your tenancy as beginning from to-morrow."

"Do you think I need to see to the notice?"

"Well, it will help the bluff; one more card for you to make the legal side stronger, eh?"

"I'll go down again myself——"

"No, sir—don't. The railroad superintendent is liable to get tired of hovering around for you. He don't know yet where you are putting up, and he's got to keep track of you. When I came alone to post you on the town clerk and the fee he was rubbernecking in after you, and asking if you put up there. He's still around, I think—yes, there he is. I'm off."

Loughlin departed precipitate. The superintendent was evidently tired of playing sleuth, for he advanced boldly now, seeing Mack alone upon the sidewalk, and said he:

"Excuse me—are you Mr. Mackenzie, just opened an employment agency?"

"Yes. Well, at least, I open to-morrow. I've just been putting in the furniture to-night—nominally, anyhow; some men took advantage to crowd in on me. Anything I can do for you?"

"Well, if you——"

"Come around to my rooms, sir," said Mack. "I'm at a boarding house on First Avenue—got a set of rooms there. Quieter than a hotel. We can chat in peace."

Toward the railroad man—Mr. Gregory by name, Hiram B. Gregory—Mack did not feel the same attraction that he had felt toward Candlass. He couldn't just tell why. The deal with Gregory seemed, as it progressed from hint to more than hint, to be a repetition of the Candlass arrangement; and on the morrow Mack had a new list to pin on his door and affix in the window after having paid five dollars to the town clerk, who, in the event, said nothing about the start ahead of time, before payment of license. Eight dollars—a week's board—to Loughlin, who refused finally any commission for his unwitting suggestion, and the five to the municipality left Mack sixteen dollars seventy-five in pocket.

Upon the authorized day of opening he gave his slips to twenty railroad men, and before lunch time put twenty dollars in right pocket, twenty dollars in left. It seemed to be the Candlass

caper all over again. But after a day or two of signing on men to extra gangs and steam shovels, he discovered that Gregory had deeps beyond the depths of Candlass, for that gentleman called at his "premises"—the shack—and, after talking pleasantly of such side issues as weather and dust, said:

"Now I've a few passes over, more than jobs indeed. There must be plenty of men in Eureka of the right sort——"

As he paused and eyed Mack, Mack could only repeat after him: "Right sort, sure!"

"You savvy?" asked Gregory.

"Yes. Well—er—do I?"

"I mean the kind of fellows that just want to get out of Eureka," said Hiram B. Gregory.

Mack pondered this, silent.

"Deep, very deep," thought Gregory.

And with that in came a very evident railroad worker. Gregory stood aside, and to the newcomer Mack said: "Well, sir, what can I do for you?"

"Got any railroad jobs left?" and as he made his inquiry this man most markedly winked—for Mack's private view.

"What kind of railroad job?" asked Mack. "Construction gang, extra gang, shovel gang, section gang?"

"Any old thing—so long as it is far from Eureka. The farthest you have on your books." The inquirer's eyelid quite clearly slightly drooped again, and Mack—the simple and the ingenuous, *tumbled*, if you will pardon the colloquialism.

"Come around after lunch and I'll see what I can do for you," he said. "The charge will be two dollars."

"Five cents a mile is railroad fare in this part of the world," said the man. "There is forty times five cents in two dollars. After lunch you say?"

"Yap."

And after he was gone Gregory and Mack smiled at each other. That visitor was not the only one who wanted to get out of Eureka, not the only one who asked, with a droop of the eye, for a job on the railroad, heedless of the kind, anxious only on one point—namely, that it be far distant. The superintendent was going off to another company, had only a few days longer in Eureka, and in his desk were spare passes for use in sending men to work for gangs up and down the railway line. He didn't see why he shouldn't leave the desk tidy, as little littered as possible. If, through some slight oversight, he sent a man or two more than was wanted here and there—well, trifling errors will occur. And besides—he was leaving the company!

At the end of a fortnight Mack had cleared two hundred dollars, and the streets of Eureka were less congested. There seemed to be no signs of more "opening up" around Eureka. The passes were all used, the superintendent left to-morrow. Loughlin was of the opinion that the smelter would be talked of for a year or two, but not erected. Mack cleared up the out-of-works in Eureka and realized, in pocket again, how recently he had been "up against it."

Sitting on the veranda at his boarding house after a quiet day, he made a chance remark, dropping it into a talk of other strikes, other excitements, that he was half inclined to "pull out" himself. He did not foresee that he was thus opening the way to another deal. But he was. For a new arrival heard the words with satisfaction; an elderly, worn, slightly shelf-rubbed-looking gentleman, who took the first opportunity to comment: "You intend to leave town?"

"I'm thinking of it, sir," Mack admitted a little dryly, with just a hint of "but I don't know you—and this is my own affair."

"Well, sir—if your business is for sale I'll make you an offer."

Mack was in his easy mood, the mood

that had made him, a fortnight ago, almost tell Candlass that if he raised his voice an octave higher he could get all the men he wanted. For a man who had performed such a little flutter as this agency flutter he was oddly unequal. This time he voiced his thought, instead of reserving it.

"I don't know if it will be much worth," he said. "You should have been here a couple of weeks ago and seen the crowds. I've got them jobs. I've shipped them out. And most of the others have pulled out of themselves."

"Oh—a quiet little business would do me," said the depressed-looking man, but with a momentary gleam of astonishment—or puzzlement—wondering what lay behind Mack's "knocking" of his own business. "A small turnover would be good enough for me. I have other irons. I don't suppose, seeing you've been so full of real matter, that you've begun circulating yet?"

Mack did not understand, but was now on guard.

"Not yet," he said.

"If you think of pulling out let me know."

"I will," and Mack drifted away to ask Loughlin if by any chance he understood the meaning of *circulating*.

"I do—surely," said Loughlin. "It means making an arrangement with bosses to fire a few men now and then—or lay them off—and it's up to them, if they want to get back to their old job again, to go to the employment agent that books up for their outfit when it is taking on men. But if that old stiff thinks he can work the racket either at the Ophir or the This-is-It he's away out. That fellow maybe thinks, like What's-his-name, that every man has his price; but I know the boss of the Ophir will show him far if he hints such a proceeding, and I'm just about as sure of the boss of the This-is-It. Still, if you are going to pull out, sell him your business—and let him try."

"I see there are tricks in all trades," said Mack.

And three days later he sublet his premises, for the rest of the month, to the new employment agent and pulled out of Eureka. From the new town of his choice he wrote a cheerful letter to Loughlin, telling of how he had fallen on his feet:

. . . and funny thing, it is only now, looking back on Eureka, that I see the joke of the man that couldn't get a job getting jobs for such a lot of others, and helping to make Eureka look more like what she really is.

To which Loughlin replied:

I saw the fun of it all along. But the new man don't strike me as funny—he's too professional. You were a glorious amateur. He pulled out of my house here, and stuck up a partition at the back of the agency day after you left, put in a stove and a bunk. I laughed more then, for both you and me forgot—what with the fun of it all—that the furniture was mine. So I went down and collected it. He tried to be nasty, but I had witnesses to my furniture. I wish you could have heard the things he said about you when he saw it was no good saying things about me. He said you were a double-dyed deceiver—just the kind of remark a fellow like that would make. Now, if *he* had borrowed those things and forgotten them, I'd have known he didn't want to remember—but you were a blessed amateur. I'll never forget the employment agency that you opened when you couldn't get a job.

B. M. BOWER, who wrote "The Lazy A," begins a two-part novel in the December 7th POPULAR. It is entitled "His Six-Gun Job."

For Fun and Father

By William Inglis

When a son decides to "follow in father's footsteps" it isn't always a welcome decision to the "dear old dad." Inglis tells of a man who had earned his bread with his fists but hated the thought of his boy becoming, like himself, a professional pugilist. A chip of the old block, however, was the son, and you will be interested in his course of action when his father cripples one arm on the eve of the championship.

PROFESSOR MIKE DONOGHUE thought he was diverting his mind with the morning paper as he sat on the porch of his neat white house in Summit Avenue, but what he was really doing was nursing a grievance. This was an indulgence he rarely allowed himself, because a grievance was like gravy on the potatoes, or beer, or any kind of pie—it interfered with perfect condition.

And the chief end of man, as Professor Mike Donoghue saw it, was to keep in perfect condition; not drawn fine, you understand, like a fellow going to run a Marathon, but always so fit that a couple of weeks' hard work would make him ready for the hardest kind of a go. Which was one reason why, at the advanced age of forty-one, he was still the best welter in the world.

Young Mike, the origin of the grievance, sat at the other end of the porch, silent and sulky. He had felt all through breakfast that the old man was after him, and now the old man's long silence and the impatient throw away of half his morning cigar convinced the boy that trouble was near. The professor's Spartan allowance was exactly two mild cigars a day, and these he burned to the bitter end on the point of his knife.

"Michael," said the professor, suddenly putting down his paper and sitting bolt upright on the edge of the rocking-chair, "I'm told you've been fighting."

"I have," the boy answered. "I've knocked out four fellows in the last month, though I only got twenty dollars for it."

"After me telling you I won't have any fighters in my family?" the professor angrily reminded him. "Don't you know it's a tough business—and besides there's nothing in it?"

"I like it," young Mike replied, with the air of one stating an unanswerable argument. Though he was curiously like his father in build and florid coloring, he had his mother's steady blue eye and something of her gentle manner that hid an inflexible will.

"Well, I tell you to stop it!" commanded the professor.

"I won't!" said the boy quite calmly. He was eighteen, and knew his rights.

"Won't you?" asked the father coldly, his voice chilling as it always did before battle. "You come out to the barn. I'll see if you won't."

From the back they looked like twin

brothers as they strode with an easy swing across the yard. Their feet seemed to spring winged from the ground, and there was the least bit of a roll in their walk. They soon stood alone on a broad, smooth floor.

"Take off your shirt!" ordered the professor, and the two stripped in silence. From an old trunk in the corner he took out four gloves of chamois. Their backs were so thickly padded that they looked clumsy, but they were really as effective as the Roman cestus, for their lining bound each set of knuckles into a solid bolt that could be driven home much harder than the bare fist.

"Now, then," said Professor Mike Donoghue, after lacing on the boy's gloves and formally shaking hands with him; he was fond of the niceties of the gentle art. "Now, then, I'll tell you; if I put you out, you'll give up fighting. If you hold me anywhere near even, you may go on in the game. And, by golly, you'll have a right to!"

The boy nodded his agreement to the terms. His father now stepped forward, his gray eyes glaring in the way that had chilled many a stout heart, and his left fist flicking out inquiringly and swift as a snake's tongue, his right ready to follow like a bolt from a crossbow. The professor made a threatening lead for the head, but young Mike did not break ground, skip out of harm's way. That would be the silly play of an amateur. He was no amateur; to him fight meant bread. He bent a trifle forward, his gaze keen in expectation, and his right fist gathered and springing for an upward dart.

"What?" cried the father, whose eye never missed one detail. "What? You'd uppercut me? Why, there isn't a man living can uppercut me!"

The boy's confident grin was so provoking that Professor Mike determined to teach him filial respect. He shot out his left fist like a javelin in a lead for the jaw; but though he moved swift as hawk on wing, the boy's retaliating right fist leaped up swifter still. The professor, quicker than thought, abandoned his blow halfway and twisted his head aside, but he could not altogether escape the uppercut. Landed on the chin, it would have dropped him cold, and now, even though it glanced off his scarred forehead, it dazed him so that he had to clinch to steady himself; also it raised a little horn that gave his left side face the aspect of a Mephistopheles.

"Well, well, Michael, you're improving," the father admitted, smiling, in the hope of discouraging the lad as much by patronizing him as by making him miss the full effect of his pet blow. But young Mike, true to his professional breeding, ignored the taunt and fought ahead as calmly as an architect drawing his plans. The fistic berserk in his rage is a great favorite with impressionable young ladies of both sexes, but in the fighting business he can't earn his salt. The only effect of the father's irritating words was to make the boy feel happy; the old man must have been well stung or he wouldn't have resorted to mere words.

It was a slender sunbeam that did young Mike's business. Father saw it first. Thus far he had found his lad far from easy. That daring and perfectly timed uppercut alone proved that he possessed some of the qualities of a master, and now he was holding his own beautifully as they lunged and parried. The professor reflected that he was wasting thousands of dollars' worth of battle effort on the stubborn boy, and the reflection made him doubly sad in these hard times. Besides, a fighting man begrudges to risk puffing up the knuckles of his hands, the precious tools of his trade, in a bout where there's no money up.

But the blessed sunbeam drove away the blues the moment old Mike saw it.

From a knot hole high in the wall the ray fell obliquely to the floor a few steps behind the boy, a stream of golden fire with a myriad motes dancing in it. Instantly the professor formed his plan and dashed in with a rattling volley of straight lefts and rights for the head that drew the boy's guard high and made him step backward past the dazzling ray.

The professor stopped. The boy gathered himself for a charge, but as he stood upright he caught the blinding shaft of light full on both eyes. As he blinked in surprise for perhaps the tenth part of a second, the professor leaped in, driving his right fist with all his power straight into the region of the solar plexus.

"You did better than I thought you could," some one was saying, and young Mike imagined it was his father's voice. Was this a dream? He was walking alone when the Broadway car hit him. He suffered no pain. He was confused, also aware of a buzzing in his head. He tried to speak, but he felt a giant's clutch on his throat, and his tongue was like a thick roll of blotting paper. By and by he could see, a little bit blurred, that his father stood near at hand, looking down at him and smiling good-naturedly.

"There's the end of your record, son," the professor chuckled. "K. O. by the old man!"

"No," protested the boy. "That knock-out wasn't right. I was going just as good as you, when all of a sudden something flashed—and now I'm done. You can't lick me, if you are the champion."

"Listen to me now," said the professor, glad of his lucky ending of such a tough customer, and gladder still that the boy wouldn't acknowledge defeat. "I put you out cold the way I put them all out—by having the science. I could do it again any time. Now I'm not going to waste my knuckles on a thickhead like you. Put on your clothes. I'm going to leave you in the Protectory till you're twenty-one. Brother Ambrose'll take all the fight out of you. He's got a bucksaw and a woodpile a block long for buckos like you."

Young Mike knew that argument was a waste of breath. He dressed in silence, puzzling meanwhile over the question that has galled losers since the game began: "Which hand did he knock me out with?" but too hurt in his pride to ask the old man about it. Still in silence the two set forth, walking briskly, for the shock had left no ill effect on the healthy boy. They were within sight of the tall towers of the Protectory before young Mike stopped.

"Wait," he surrendered. "I'm not going to stay in there the next two years. What do you want me to do?"

"Keep out of the ring and learn to be a good business man," said the professor. "Mr. Flood has promised me to start you as a clerk in the Bank of Manahatta. You'll have the chance of your life."

"Oh, all right," the boy accepted grudgingly as they turned and started for home. "You've got me tied up in this thing. But say, pop, you're spoiling an awful good fighter to make a poor business man."

Yet in that prediction, Michael Aloysius Donoghue did himself a grave injustice. He had boldness, initiative, imagination, friendliness, and no end of self-confidence, and he applied them all to his new job. Behind the polished brass bars of the Bank of Manahatta his lithe body and fearless gaze seemed as much out of place as a young falcon behind the wire walls of a chicken run; but old man Flood liked the boy, first for his father's sake and soon for his own. When fussy Peddlington, the head bookkeeper, came in after a clash

that upset his dignity, intending to recommend the dismissal of the youngster, Mr. Flood guessed what was in his mind and beat him to it by casually remarking: "Give young Donoghue five a week more after this. He brought in two good new accounts last week. Wish we had more lads like him."

That the new accounts were really the tributes of tired business men who had seen young Mike months ago hammer the heads and daunt the hearts of a couple of bumptious youths at their club was neither here nor there. The boy had push; he made friends and attracted new business. Therefore he was watched and tended as carefully as a budding plant—the rarest plant that grows among the stone and steel of the great city, the plant that grows dollars.

So young Mike, after only two years downtown, was in a fair way to become a successful man of affairs, and he enjoyed the prospect. As he sat at breakfast on the morning of Labor Day he was wondering how much he was going to enjoy the game of golf to which a customer had invited him at Upper Essex Vale. Presently he noticed that his father, very solemn, was eating breakfast under a heavy handicap. His chops had been cut up in the kitchen, and he was pecking at them with only the right hand.

"How's that wrist, pop?" the youngster asked cheerfully.

"Bad," replied his father, bringing up the left hand from his knee and resting it on the table. The fingers were puffy and purple at the tips, and the hand was wrapped over and over again with white surgical bandaging, while the end of a splint protruded from beneath the coat sleeve.

"I'm glad Doctor Hammond stopped me when he heard it crack on Conny McCusker's thick head," old Mike continued. "He sent for his X-ray man to come and take a good view of it. Just now he telephones me that the radium bone or something is broken, and if I use the hand I'm liable to lose it."

"M-m-m-m!" groaned the boy. "Can you stop Reddy Gibson with one hand?"

"No," replied his father; "he's a pretty good man, and I'd be a fool to take the chance. Golly, but it's tough to lose my championship on a forfeit!"

"Won't he postpone for a couple o' months?"

"And me crippled?" cried old Mike. "Postpone nothing. He'll grab that championship and tour the world with it, and I'll be an old fellow with long white whiskers before he'll ever face me again. Nothing to it, with that fox Morris Houseman managing him. I don't know—I'll try for a draw with one hand."

"Oh—say—pop!" Hurt pride made the words a moan.

"I've got to do it, Michael," the father said. "The last two thousand on this house is due on the fifteenth, and I figured on to-night's money to do that and a lot over. By jingoes, I've got to do it, that's all! Jeff beat Sharkey with one arm crippled, and I'll do the same to Reddy Gibson."

Young Mike's face paled, and his eyes burned as the thought of a great adventure gripped him. He leaned far over the table.

"Listen, pop," he said. "Sharkey's a rough, willing bull; no science; always bringing the fight to you. Reddy Gibson's no Sharkey. He's got everything. You said yourself he's a good man."

Professor Mike Donoghue groaned—not at the burning pain of his fractured forearm, but at something far worse—the cold, unanswerable argument of his son. To meet Reddy Gibson this way

was suicide—so far as his title was concerned.

"I could get him, pop," the boy continued eagerly. "I've seen him go, and I know every move he makes. Saw him beat Honey Savage last month. He telegraphs his punch. Let me lick him for you."

"Let you lick him!" cried the professor angrily. "I thought I made you stop fighting!"

Not that Mike was thankless for his son's kind offer; but a champion is an autocrat—and he had given an order.

"Well, I have stopped fighting—that is, regular fighting," the boy dutifully explained; "but I've been working regularly at Bill Brown's gym. Right along. All comers; I'm at the weight, too. Think of it, pop, we can't let this fellow run away with anything like this. You know you said you'd stay as long as you liked and then retire undefeated. But this would put a black mark on your record. We don't want to let any one put anything on us."

For ten minutes old Mike sat still while the boy talked. Now and then he looked at his crippled left hand, that left which shot straight and true as a bullet, without whose help he would never have become a hero of world-wide fame. The lad appealed to his pride in his good name, to his love for his family, to everything that would help to turn the scale of his father's obdurate decree that he should never fight in the ring.

"Well, I don't know," muttered old Mike at last. "There might be a chance. You telephone Mr. Rutherford you can't go golfing to-day. I'll give you a try-out with Conny McCusker at ten o'clock."

The boy danced on tiptoe as he shaped up before his father's long-armed sparring partner. At last he was getting close to the game he loved. That Conny was two inches taller than he and ten pounds heavier and swung a deadly right only added a little zest to the bout. He was cool as a Christmas thermometer and he determined to be merciful and put Conny out quickly—which would also save his energy for serious business that evening.

So at the call of time he bustled in briskly, feinting fast with both hands, and soon had Conny's long arms tangled in such a knot that he could not start a blow. Suddenly he stepped back. Conny measured him a moment with his shrewd little blue eyes; then started a rush. Young Mike, with the acquired intuition of the born warrior, knew what was coming, and anticipated it. Up flew his right glove in the uppercut that old Mike remembered so well. It crashed on the side of Conny's chin before the big fellow's left fist had shot halfway to its mark. Conny's shrewd eyes suddenly dulled.

Tap! went young Mike's right again on the chin, and big Conny would have dived hard upon the floor if the boy had not caught him and let him down gently.

"There, pop!" young Mike insisted. "Now what do you think?"

"By golly!" cried Mike generously. "I don't know but what you might do. Anyway, it'll be better than forfeiting the title."

Father and son were at the Longacre Building an hour later to keep an engagement with the promoter, Dan McKettrick. The elevator man, ignoring the smiles of a pair of chattering wrens flitting to a movie booking office, vaunted his intimacy with the great by stopping his car with a flourish at the seventh floor and directing Mike: "Fourth door to the left, perfess. Say, Dan'll be glad to see you!"

But what was this? The fourth door was there all right, but it couldn't have anything to do with the fighting busi-

ness. Thick black letters on the frosted glass proclaimed: "Compagnie Générale Française, 43 Rue Blanche, Paris."

"This might be it," old Mike ventured. "You know, Dan has fights in Paris, too. But it looks too much like a bank."

Within the frosted door a keen-eyed young woman sat at a telephone desk behind a rail and asked: "Who did you want to see? Have you an appointment? Oh, Mr. Donoghue! Come right in. You're expected."

They followed her into the private office. A gigantic black on his way out was saying: "Yes, suh, I'll be ready fo' him on the fo'teenth," bobbed his massive head, and vanished. Behind a broad, flat mahogany desk sat a bright-eyed and pony-built young man, who held a telephone receiver to his left ear, while with his right hand he waved a greeting and pointed to chairs.

"Montreal?" he shouted into the transmitter. "Is this Mr. Grandin? Listen! You tell the Soldier to put him out to-night. What? No. . . . No. . . . Oh, I know, but I won't take a chance. You tell the Soldier to 'out' him cold. Thanks. Good-by. Well, professor, how about you? And young Mike, too? Bertha, bring in Mr. Houseman. There now, we're all together, what's the news? What's this important business you telephoned about, Mike?"

"This," the professor replied, thrusting his bandaged arm out of its sleeve. "Conny McCusker ducked into it. It's a fracture."

"Fwee-ee-ee!" whistled Houseman. "Where's that ten-thousand-dollar house now, Dan?"

The chunky little promoter looked dazed.

"Well, of all——" he began, but instantly stopped. "Nothing doing on the spilt-milk thing," he announced, forcing a smile. "Do you suppose the crowd'd stand for Rube Reynolds against Reddy?"

"Not for a minute," Houseman decided. "The Rube's a dead one. I hate to let the money get away, but that's all there is to it. Y'understand, p'fessor, I'm sorry for your little accident, but we've gotta take your one thou' forfeit. Business is business. We gotta take the title, too."

"No, you don't," old Mike interrupted. "I passed the title to this lad —coming down in the subway."

"To that kid? Quit stringin'!" laughed Houseman.

"He's licked better men that Reddy Gibson," cried old Mike. "I'll bet you evens against my thousand forfeit you're taking that my Michael will lick him."

Houseman tapped his forehead with the knuckles of his right hand, as one who knocks at a door. "Nobody home! Nobody home!" he mocked.

"One minute there!" exploded Danny McKettrick, jumping out of his chair, his eyes alight and his right fist clenched as he chopped it down on the desk. "Listen, Houseman; Mike's right. It'll draw a bumper house. I can see the headlines: 'Brave Son Takes Father's Place.' Bertha! Bertha! Listen, Bertha! You call up Bob Edgren, Tad, and all the other sporting editors. Tell 'em in five minutes I'll give 'em the best sporting story of the year. And wait. Bring me a new contract blank. Come on, Houseman; you can't afford to miss this."

"Well," the foxy manager slowly surrendered. "I suppose—well, we'll fight him on only one condition—winner take all."

Danny was right. There had been already a big advance sale of seats to the two kinds of ring goers who put profits in the managers' pocket—the rooters who go to see the champion win and the cordial haters who go in the pious hope of seeing him knocked

out. And when the late editions of the evening papers displayed on their first pages the astounding news that the welter champion had broken his deadly left arm and that his place was to be taken by his ruddy-cheeked bank-clerk son, to whom he had given the title that very day in a subway train, the multitude made up its mind that this would be real sport. To watch the model of filial devotion go up against the fierce, two-handed Reddy Gibson was as alluring to the crowd as the prospect of seeing a husky young Christian tackling a tried gladiator would have been to the sophisticated citizens of Nero's Rome.

Long before the doors of the Garden were opened, at seven o'clock, the avenue and side streets were blocked with the proletariat, who scrambled and sweated for the chance to give up one dollar apiece and hope for good places on the floor or in the sky parlor of the vast structure, as well as chief bookkeepers, floorwalkers, et cetera, willing to sacrifice two dollars each for better places in the same good cause. Also many a connoisseur of The Game who had tired of seeing old Mike always flatten his challengers, found his appetite revived at the hope of seeing a real struggle, and took a ringside seat.

So when father and son jumped out of a taxicab at nine o'clock and found it hard work to get through the throng still slowly jamming in at the main entrance, the professor was much cheered.

"By golly, Michael," he exclaimed, "if you drop him right there'll be five thousand in it for you, as well as the honor of the championship."

"I guess it'll do us as much good as it'd do him," replied the boy stolidly. In his soul were flaring fires of ambition and hope of glory; some thought, too, of big money; but he felt it due to his status as a real warrior to show no sign of emotion, especially as he came near the enemy.

A friendly police lieutenant threw men right and left out of their way as they got near the shiny brass barriers at the entrance. Up the mosaic-paved incline and past the heavy garnet plush portières they thrust their way into the body of the Garden—that gigantic amphitheater which is a hippodrome or a circus or a Gargantuan auditorium, but bears no trace of a garden except its name.

Filled with a blue haze, the space seemed as limitless as a prairie, roofed over at an incredible height with glass and steel, and altogether given over to worshipers of My Lady Nicotine. The thick blue and gray clouds of their acrid incense rolled and swirled through the soggy atmosphere. In the midst of the structure was a high platform, with stout posts at its four corners and incased in a square of dark, plush-covered ropes—the "ring," in which two small but ruggedly muscled youths were hopping, now toward, now away, from each other, exchanging fierce scowls and stampings of loudly threatening feet—everything but hard blows, which they did not know how to deliver.

"The first prelim," said young Mike. "We're early enough."

"Now, remember," counseled the professor when they had pushed through the crowded standing room and up the stairs leading to the dressing rooms at the rear; "remember when you meet him to crunch his hand as you shake it and say: 'I hope you're well. You have need to be.'"

"Don't you worry, pop," responded the lad cheerfully. "I'll get his goat."

"That's right," said the professor. "Many a battle is won at the go-off. Why, John L. would give a man one black look that'd take all the fight out of him. That's how he knocked out many a one."

Young Mike had barely exchanged

his street clothes for a pair of bell-legged linen running breeks and snugly laced up his white kid fighting shoes, when his father opened the door in response to a loud knock and let in "Good Eye" Charley White, the referee, followed by Reddy Gibson, with his manager and seconds.

Charley solemnly introduced the strangers—really these preliminaries to a ring battle have their code as rigid as the court regulations of the Medes and Persians—and instantly half a dozen voices were repeating formally: "Pleased t' meet you." All, that is, except the voice of young Mike. When Reddy Gibson, grinning patronizingly, uttered the formula, the lad crunched his hand, looked down coldly into his eyes, and sneered: "Huh! It's a long walk back to Oshkosh!" The visitor seemed disturbed.

Presently Charley White was warning the boxers that they must let go the moment he ordered them to break out of a clinch.

"I know," agreed young Mike pleasantly. "Now he can't rough me like this." And he threw his arms around Reddy, picked him up as if he were a doll, and bumped his head against the wall so hard that he was dazed by the shock.

"See!" he continued, smiling reassuringly. "That's clean wrong, as I understand the rules. If we're clinched and you say 'Break!' I can let go"—swinging Reddy up in his arms again and setting him down off his balance—"and as soon as I let go I can sting him, like this." Whereupon he drove his bandaged left and right fists into Gibson's astonished floating ribs so hard that the challenger involuntarily grunted and doubled up. He glared, too, with righteous rage; but the boy was gazing innocently at the referee, intent only on the interpretation of the rules; and to display resentment now would only make Reddy ridiculous. He was just half a minute too late.

He was still raging—the most perilous frame of mind for a fighting man—when he climbed the little stair into the ring. The scanty applause that greeted him did not divert his mind. The idea of a young duck without as much as one line of record slamming him around like that—slamming him, a mature warrior of twenty-six years, with fifty battles to his credit against the toughest welters in the Middle West! Say, it was more than a guy could stand. Well, he'd learn him, the fresh young whatchamacall him; he'd learn him!

Young Mike sauntered indolently across the ring, wearing a bath robe of rich, dark blue with a vivid green stripe, a modest enough color scheme, yet dazzling Reddy as the last word in luxury and fashion. There was not a wrinkle in the boy's clear-cut, high-colored countenance, for he was naturally at the weight, and his grayish-blue eyes were flashing joy from beneath their bony brows as he bowed right and left in answer to the applause the crowd was showering on his father's son. "Atta boy!" "Hand him one for me, Mike!" and "Oh, you champeen kiddo!" sounded clearer than any other phrases that shot through the smoke-drenched air.

The sleek brown hair, brushed back from the lad's high forehead, was the last touch that marked him as one who knew his way about among the sophisticated. He grinned down patronizingly over Gibson's rough red thatch as he offered his right hand to the challenger, who churlishly remained seated.

"Go on, you tango pup!" snarled Reddy, drawing away his right hand and feeling angrier than ever as he realized his own lack of polish by contrast with this fashion-plate lad.

"Why, Agnes, how cruel of you!"

the boy jeered at him. "If I'd thought you'd miss your goat so much I wouldn't have taken it away from you. How's the back of your head?"

Before he could check the impulse, Reddy's hand flew up to his head, and felt a lump like a doorknob. At the sore touch he let loose such a volley of ugly words that young Mike drew back in mock alarm.

"Oh, Mr. White," he pleaded to the referee, "don't let him waste all his steam like that! Save him for me, won't you?"

A harsh gong clanged, and Reddy Gibson bounded out of his corner, burning with wrath against the humiliating young devil, eager to hit that sneering grin so hard that it could never mock him again. Reddy plunged across the ring, driving forth his left fist in a swift jab and following it instantly with a swinging right that would have cracked a head of granite.

But young Mike, not having that kind of a head, gave ground by bounding lightly backward over the space of four feet; so that the whizzing right swung through empty air and its force spun Reddy halfway around. In the instant that he whirled off his balance the boy sprang, soft-footed as a cat, to his side, gave him a push with his left hand that spun him all the way around, and then whipped his right fist in a short, vicious hook that met Reddy's jaw as it was still revolving toward him.

Crash! The Westerner dropped on hands and knees. "H'ray!" "Atta boy, Mike!" "Eat him up, kiddo!" resounded through the yells that seemed to shake the walls of the Garden and make the lights dance and blink in their drifting draperies of blue smoke.

"Going to be a real fight," muttered Edgren at the ringside, sketching the efficient right hook and the falling Reddy; "but I hope the boy'll have sense and not take chances."

Vain hope. Who ever heard of a prudent boy? Young Mike, intoxicated by sudden success and the cheering, was balanced on tiptoe, ready to deliver the finishing blow the moment the enemy got up for it. Meantime, Reddy Gibson was slowly extricating himself from a dream in which he was standing on his head and spinning the round world on his heavy feet.

Just as he scrambled down nicely on all fours atop of the whirling world, he heard a new and terrible voice cry "Five!" looked up, and saw a moving arm which he traced back to old Good Eye Charley White.

"Six!" and the fog whisked out of his brain. He understood. He was again the cunning gladiator. The hard knockdown had restored the mental balance that the gibes of the boy had disturbed.

When the referee chanted "Eight!" Reddy stood upright on ostentatiously quivering legs, his body bowed as if by the weight of centuries, and his whole aspect more wretched than that of the much pitied Man with the Hoe. As he sagged forward, seemingly intent upon a weak left drive for the chin, young Mike dashed in a straight left counter to anticipate it. Whereat Gibson ducked his crafty head under the blow and ripped in the savage right hook for the ribs that he had been nursing—and landed it.

Young Mike instantly doubled up, sat suddenly on the floor, toppled there a moment, and fell over on his side like a great, sprawling letter A. Within three seconds of time the boy was pushing the floor away with both hands—at least, that is how it felt—and the first thing that made a clear record on his consciousness was his father's sharp command: "Stay down!" Next he discovered he was on all fours, and became aware of the fickle crowd cheering his adversary. Then he heard the referee slowly tolling away the precious ten seconds within which a

boxer must get up or lose the bout—and his mind, so recently a blank, snapped back into its functioning.

Youth hasn't much sense, but it does beat all for rallying. At "Nine!" the boy jumped up, stood erect, scowled, and made so threatening a play for the body with his left that Reddy darted forward, blocked the blow, wound his long arms around him, and clinched. Each now held the other harmless and rested, breathing heavily. When they let go of each other at White's sharp cry of "Break!" Reddy was in the midst of a profane outburst. Young Mike thrust him sharply back and drove his swift right fist into the body, just as he had demonstrated the blow in the dressing room. Really, concentration of thought upon the business in hand is as important in the ring as it is in the Stock Exchange, for example. Reddy resolved not to talk any more; it was too dangerous. Each was now tired from the furious pace, so they sparred cautiously until the gong clanged the end of the three minutes which constituted the round.

Old Mike was angry as he welcomed the boy to his corner. "Are you trying to make him a present of my championship?" he asked in biting tones as he shoved a stool under the young boxer. "Don't you let him fool you again by shaking his legs. That's the stalest old trick in the world. I'm ashamed of you! When you drop him again, watch his eyes as he gets on his feet. When the eyes roll up, glassy, then he's going—and you finish him!"

Young Mike remained silent; not for lack of a ready reply, but to save his breath for more important business.

Reddy was not so impetuous when, after one minute, the gong again called the boxers to battle. Swiftly he made half a dozen feints, drew his antagonist into range, and was just about to loose a thunderbolt at him—but at that moment young Mike pushed back the threatening fist with his finger tips, thus throwing him off his balance, so that he couldn't strike. Then the lad drove in a straight left on the cheek, which hit too high to daze Reddy, and followed it with his lightninglike right uppercut. Alas! again for the haste of youth; the blow landed too high. Instead of staggering Gibson it merely raised on his cheek bone the sort of contusion that is called a "mouse."

In the next round, Reddy struck too low. The referee saw it and warned him, though young Mike made no protest. His father shouted "Foul!" but White merely nodded and waved his hand for the men to fight on.

As the tall lad stepped lightly here and there, feinting at the adversary to disconcert him while rallying his own strength, dissipated by the foul blow, old Mike was suddenly struck by the expression of patience on his pale countenance.

"By golly!" he exclaimed. "He's a game fellow all right. And doesn't he look like his mother? Why, he's the picture of Julia!" A wave of compassion swayed him; it wasn't fair to let the boy—his boy and Julia's—be tortured like this. He was actually thinking of breaking into the ring to protest—if it happened again—when the gong rang.

The lad walked slowly over to his corner and sat down heavily. His father in silence thrust a thick green vial of smelling salts under his nostrils, while another second rubbed the back of his head and neck with a lump of ice.

"A-a-ah!" said the boy, bending forward from the hips and drawing a deep breath. "A-a-ah! I'm all right now. I'll get him this next round."

"Don't you do it!" ordered the professor. "Listen to me. You feel good now, but you won't get your punch back yet a while. Take your time. Be shifty."

Which is the reason why young Mike in the next three rounds stepped so fast and feinted and dodged so brilliantly that the connoisseurs in the ringside boxes nudged one another and joyously cried aloud: "Some class!" The boy landed a few blows, too, but they were mere taps.

It is a curious thing that we all believe what we want to believe. The very brilliance and speed that made the critics exclaim in admiration seemed to Reddy Gibson certain evidence of weakness.

"He's lost his punch," Reddy declared as he came back to his corner after vainly pursuing the boy through the sixth round. His seconds, being mere sparring partners, not clothed with the habit of authority, yielded a ready chorus of assent—sure; they had noticed that he'd lost the old punch.

"Watch me get him!" boasted Reddy as the gong crashed the call for the seventh. But young Mike was still elusive. He flitted here and there all over the ring, not breaking his flight into steps so that one could be distinguished from another, but seeming to glide to and fro by mere volition, appearing and disappearing as uncannily as a ray shot from a mirror in the hands of a playful boy. Also he laughed heartily once as Reddy, in frantic chase, slipped in his own wet corner and fell almost flat. That hearty laugh was bad for Reddy's temper.

"Come on and fight, you tango pet!" he taunted.

"Huh?" asked young Mike, with a chuckle, seeming altogether innocent and gay, but tactically checking his retreat. For he could see that Reddy was gathering all his force for a sudden hard smash—was displaying his warning "telegraph," which he was unaware of practicing.

"Come on!" growled Reddy, starting a fierce left hook for the head. "Come on and——"

The perfectly timed uppercut of young Mike flashed up and caught the tip of Reddy's jawbone with a spat that could be heard in the last row of boxes. Reddy instantly started to dive as Conny McCusker had dived in the morning when the same crusher impinged on his chin. The youth had a fleeting vision of Gibson's up-rolling eyes, so he threw his arms about him and gently lowered him to the floor. Then he walked unconcernedly away. The crowd cheered him much for his considerate act, and the papers next morning said he was a fine young fellow and an ornament to his trying profession.

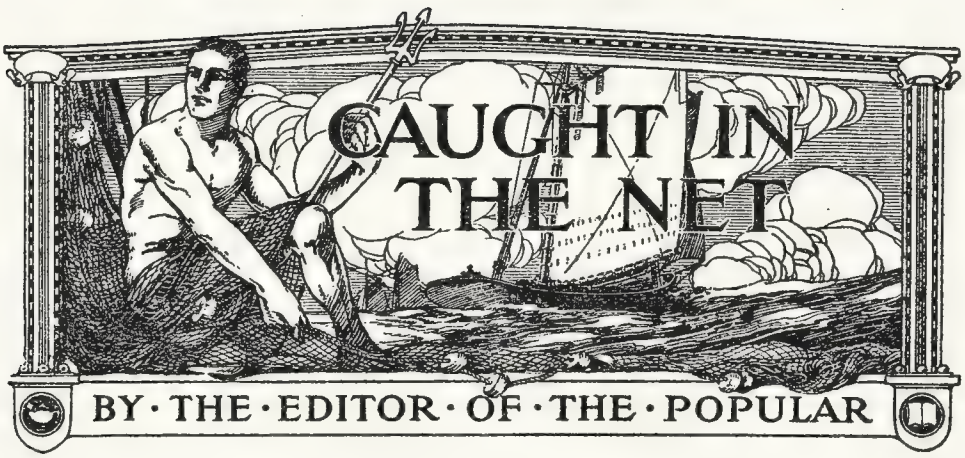
Old Mike, having with great difficulty restrained himself till he heard Charley White count aloud the fateful "Ten!" now swarmed up into the ring like a whirlwind, threw his arms around his son, squeezed the last breath out of him, and—as he thought—patted him on the back.

"Look out, pop," the boy protested. "You're hitting me harder than he did."

"Never!" cried the professor, whanging him again. "I couldn't make a dent in you with an iron club. Say, I'm going to let you keep the championship."

"No, thanks, pop; I don't want it," young Mike replied. "I give it back to you now. You'll be better than ever after your arm gets well. If you'll lend me half the purse I'll put it in a good war stock I got a tip on. I'm going to stay in business. I only fought to-night for fun and to make a pinch hit for you. I'm going to stay in business."

"Well, by golly, that beats me!" cried the professor. "The best man in the world at his weight, and won't keep the title. Holds it half a day and makes more out of it than I would in six months. And yet he'd rather be a business man. Come home, Michael. It'll take your mother to settle this."



THE OLD AND THE NEW

THERE is a hope abroad in our land among all classes. Again and again in the settlements we hear young Jews and Jewesses whose parents were immigrants from poverty and suffering in east Europe express a love of our country and a fighting philosophy of life. They believe in activity, are glad of the chance to earn a decent livelihood. Hope burns with some brightness even in our so-called slums.

Our friends across the seas are hopeless about life. They have forgotten their faith that life can be remade by the individual. They don't believe heartily in the individual unless he belongs to the ruling class, and is already on top by right of birth and university training. They need to break out into new activities. Their women need vocational education, a job in life to test their powers. Their men need a belief that hard work will bring advancement. Some of the best of the English have gone to Canada to try their luck on new soil in a more hopeful air. One family sailed for Australia—mother, father, three children.

The idle men are a strange sight to the Western eye. The unemployed are not alone herded in East Ends of great cities. You meet them on country roads. They easily pass over into tramps and beggars.

More depressing than the unemployed poor are the idle men of the middle class. In a seaside village you meet them. Men who retire at thirty-five years of age, living on a small income, drinking, gambling, loafing the days away, lost in life. Family after family, taking no periodical except a daily illustrated paper of sensation and fashion; no ideas under discussion, unconnected with vital constructive work. No wonder a despairing handful of women have risen in rage and wildness, determined to end that, at any cost. The life is deadly. Make no mistake. Live it with them for a few months. Catch their talk, a clatter of nothings, a bitterness of impotence. The women are untrained to concentrated spirited work, in desperation hiring out as lady governesses, lady attendants on sick dowagers, lady incompetents in dreary petty routine.

Contrast that with a New England family, with its two or three periodicals, its busy life of reading clubs, social service, its children at college, ideas seething through its crowded day, and hope, always hope. Contrast it with a Middle

Western town. There they are experimenting with commission government, planning the larger city with parks, boulevards, modern lighting. A large, well-stocked library, used by the whole town constantly. Each family takes its magazine, follows its own particular sort of reform work, has its heroes.

LOSS OF LIFE

A FEW months ago, during one of the innumerable crises in the Mexican situation, when American intervention seemed imperative, a well-meaning, but applause-loving, orator was justifying us for staying out. He shot his fist into the air and sang out fervidly: "I'd rather see every railroad, every mine, every factory, every dollar of foreign capital in Mexico wiped out of existence than for one of our good American boys to lose his life down there."

Whatever real arguments the orator may have had against intervention, this sentimental slush was certainly not one. For, by the same process of reasoning, he would close every shop, every factory, stop every railroad train, lay off every construction gang in America, for none of these activities are carried on without loss of life. Further, he would stop all the farming, for every year several hundred good American boys lose their lives in the battle with the soil, the elements, and their tools.

Waste of life in any activity, from any cause, is to be regretted—and prevented as far as possible. Life is almost of supreme importance to the individual. It should be almost of supreme importance to the State. But not all life is wasted that is lost. That it will cost life is not conclusive proof that a thing should not be done. Perhaps it will cost more life not to do it. It may be that the result is worth more than the expenditure of life.

Life is made to use. We may wear it out in the work our hands find to do; or we may lose it suddenly performing the same sort of duty. In neither case is it wasted—unless our carelessness or some one else's disregard has needlessly caused its loss.

Neither our national policy nor our economic enterprises can be determined on a basis of no expenditure of human life. Whether we go or whether we stay, there will be tears and heartaches and tragedies and death. The final determining factor must always be:

"It is work that should be done, and are we the ones who should do it?"

THE TWIST THAT GIVES US CLOTHES

ALL the vast business of dry goods and clothing is founded on a twist. Without it there would be no clothes such as we are accustomed to wear. We would have to dress in the skins of animals.

This twist is a physical one. All cloth, no matter of what material it is made, is composed of fibers from two inches to two feet long. The only way yet discovered of making these short fibers into cloth is by first twisting or spinning them into a thread or yarn. The next step is the weaving of the yarn into a fabric. These two things are the basis of all textiles, no matter what

the material or the length of the fiber. A fiber of cotton is the shortest. It measures from one-half to two inches in length. A fiber of silk is the longest, sometimes several hundred yards in extent, and of exceeding fineness.

When the fibers have been washed and dressed, combed and straightened, by machines that seem almost human in their intelligence, comes the all-important twist. The fineness of the yarn is designated as the "count." The count of cotton yarn is based on the number of hanks per pound. Each hank contains 840 yards. If eighty hanks weigh a pound, the yarn is No. 80, and so on. Worsted-yarn counts are based on the number of hanks containing 560 yards to the pound. Spun-silk yarn is numbered on the same system as cotton. The fineness of thrown silk, however, is determined by the weight of a skein 520 yards long expressed in deniers, reckoning 533 1-3 deniers to the ounce. Thirty deniers weigh twenty-seven grains; therefore one thousand yards of No. 30 spun-silk yarn equal a small copper cent in weight. The count of linen yarns is based on a hank or "lea" of 300 yards. The number of leas to the pound is the count of the yarn. Yarn measuring 9,000 yards to the pound would be No. 30. The origin of these terms "denier" and "lea" is so ancient that it has not been traced. All that is known is that a small silver coin in the time of William the Conqueror was called a "denier," and that "lea" was once spelled "lay."

PROGRESS

THE modern world is filled with excitements that devour all measure. Life makes itself heard to-day in a series of detonations. It is an age of extravagance. The great American novel is being published every other month, now in Indiana, now in Chicago, occasionally even in Boston. Peerless popular leaders are discovered, heralded, elected, and thrown to the dogs. Sensations are constantly being sprung. After the first dazzle, they are shoveled away in hasty burial, with not even a tombstone to record their brief glory. Big businesses are set whirling till they break up with a hot box. Everything is mammoth, amazing, short-lived. The Idol of the People is caught up into headlines, his face flowers in every shop window. He moves in a tumult of approval. Then the populace are around the block after a fresh hero, with a crisper style. Every bit of vitality on the continent is in a mad tear of haste and noise, getting there first. *There* being somewhere ahead. If, every time you are seen by your contemporaries, you are covered with dust and blurred with speed, you are said to be arriving.

A MAN-OF-WAR'S TREASURE

THE richest treasure ship—the biggest prize that ever fared over the long sea roads—was a British man-of-war that slipped secretly out of the harbor of Simon's Town, South Africa, one moonless night last January. Her lading was from the mines of the Transvaal: More than $111,000,000 in bar gold—the price of half a dozen superdreadnaughts.

One would never expect to find any shipping news in the financial statement of the Bank of England that is issued every Thursday and cabled all over

the world. But in those imposing ranks of figures was the only indication of the safe arrival of the battleship and the bullion that was printed. Early in February the report showed that the bank's supply of bar gold had been increased by 22,204,000 the preceding week.

It was toward the end of December that the work of transferring this bar gold from the Johannesburg bank vaults, where it had been accumulating for many months, to London was resolved upon. Few were aware of the nature of the contents of the wooden boxes, heavily clamped with steel, that were brought forth and unobtrusively loaded on drays for delivery at the railway station. All the transferring was done between midnight and morning, while the city slept. When the work was done, the one hundred and eighty-two tons of gold, described on the bill of lading as "iron bars," started on its long journey by rail to Simon's Town, the harbor at the Cape where the battleship waited. There were two unusual features about its transit, however: The train ran without stops, except to change engines, and it was heavily guarded by armed men. At Simon's Town it was run down the wharf, alongside the battleship, and put aboard.

Gold, in the mighty struggle that is going on, commands, if not men, at least the food, ships, arms, and munitions for their use. The vital importance attached to the South African mining industry in the present crisis can be inferred from the fact that the British government has given special instructions to maintain the output of the mines at all costs. The production of these fields since the war began has established a new record. Ordinarily South Africa contributes seventy per cent of the raw gold received in London, and about forty per cent of the world's production. Great Britain has practically unlimited wealth in the rocks of the Witwatersrand.

CELEBRATING A TWENTY-FIVE-HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY

WE feel old when we celebrate a three-hundredth anniversary here in America. In the Far East, however, anything that happened only three centuries ago is regarded as a recent event. Nothing under ten centuries attracts serious attention.

The twenty-five-hundredth anniversary of the death of Jimmu Tenno, the first of the Japanese emperors, was celebrated April 17th of this year at the temple where his remains are enshrined. This commemoration of an event that occurred twenty-five centuries ago probably is without parallel in the world's history. The festival was curtailed, however, owing to the mourning for the late empress dowager. So long a continuity of imperial rule as has been witnessed in Japan is unique. The present emperor is a direct descendant of the founder of the line. The celebration is the more remarkable as it is a secular memorial, whereas nearly all other ancient ceremonials have a religious character.

Six years from now will come the twenty-four-hundredth anniversary of the death of Confucius, but whether the Chinese people are sufficiently interested to commemorate such an important anniversary of their ancient sage and philosopher on a national scale is problematical.

The Emancipation of Rodney

By H. C. Witwer

Author of "Confidence," "A Little Knowledge," Etc.

Why the scholarly features of Rodney Hatch Benham came to adorn the Hall of Fame of Hicksville College and the name of Benham rose from a thing of scorn to a title of honor

IF ever you go to Hicksville, Iowa, you will visit Hicksville College as a matter of course—because that institution of learning is *the* show place of the town. The low stone wall that surrounds it only partly screens the beautiful campus and historic old buildings from which many a sheepskin-armed graduate has turned with a deep sigh of regret. You will be shown over the grounds and through halls and lecture rooms—if your visit is between terms—by a venerable, old colored man, who gets a salary from the students.

After you have feasted your artistic sense on the moss-covered buildings and massive old oaks, you will be taken, a little reverently, to Briggs Hall—as a sort of *pièce de résistance.* In the largest room, which is filled—probably to overflowing by now—with trophies of the Hicksville students' chase after athletic honors, you will find the walls lined with photographs of famous stars, individual and collective, of the college.

"And who is this one?" you will ask your voluble guide.

He will follow your gaze with shining eyes as he sees the thin, elongated form of Rodney Hatch Benham, '07, clad in the conventional black, flowing gown and three-cornered hat of the graduate, which costume is just what you would expect with the grim, studious face that rises from the garment. The tortoise-shell glasses seem eminently proper.

"That, sah," your guide will answer, lingering lovingly over the words; "that, sah, am Mister Benham; the greatest football player this yere college ever produced!"

"Oh, no," you will say, with an indulgent smile, "I don't mean that one—*this* is the one." And you'll point vulgarly at the likeness of Rodney again.

"That's the very one, sah!" the guide will retort, with a sort of patient indignation, for he has made that same retort a great many times; "I know he doesn't *look it,* but you ain't the first one he's fooled!"

And then he'll chuckle softly, as though this were the first time he had attested the prowess of Rodney to the skeptical stranger. All of which brings us to how and why Rodney's scholarly features came to adorn the Hall of Fame of Hicksville College, and the name of Benham rose from a thing of scorn to a title of honor.

The Great Sculptor was in a jocular mood when he modeled Rodney Benham and cast the soul of a cave man into the frame of the æsthetic scholar. In his flat-heeled canvas shoes, which Rodney wore religiously as being the proper thing for the athletic young man, he stood six foot one, allowing for the slight bend to his shoulders. His weight was somewhere in the neighborhood of one hundred and fifty; yet, looking at him, you would think

that a wild exaggeration. Sparse, sandy hair topped a face lean and cadaverous. Women with his shapeliness of limb and neck become old maids, school-teachers, or both.

When Rodney passed into the inner portals of Hicksville College, the faculty hailed him with a delight that equaled the scorn of the student body. The former saw in him a shining light that would startle the world with its intellectual brilliance—Heaven be with the debating society that opposed him on "The Relation of the Astral Bodies to Our Spiritual Welfare," for instance!

The students saw in Rodney nothing more startling than another "grind," who would come up to the expectations of the faculty and tell if they hazed him.

In a measure both were wrong. Rodney hated Cæsar for his Commentaries and loved him for his conquests on the field of arms. He admired Homer only because of his ability to tell of a good fight story, yet the latter paled into insignificance in the light of the mighty Hercules.

Rodney despised compulsive education in all its forms. Geometry was a hideous nightmare, while Euclid approached delirium tremens! He was a "grind" through necessity, not choice, because education came so hard to him that he *had* to sit up—sometimes all night—to pass the commonest examination, all the while being credited with an abnormal capacity for learning because of his scholarly appearance.

Rodney's being burned with the desire to attain—illiteracy! He longed to overnight forget the cube root of two hundred and six and the age of Alexander the Great's triumphs. He took up an exhaustive study of the sporting finals, memorizing the slangiest phrases, and then, in the security of his room, he'd pace up and down before the mirror, spouting such expressions as "He's a bonehead!" "Knock him out, kid!" and others equally comprehensive, until the surrounding welkin rang merrily in his ears. If there had been a college in this fair land that gave diplomas for dissertations on the manly art of self-defense, football, baseball, and other pastimes—where the textbooks were written by James J. Corbett and Christy Mathewson—Rodney would have been the joy of that institution's faculty.

Once, while he was attending preparatory school, Rodney had slipped over to a prize fight in a near-by city. Oh, night of nights! The Arabian evenings were boresome relaxations by comparison. This—as Rodney assured himself blissfully—was *the* life!

This, then, was Rodney Hatch Benham, who, if some one had hailed him as "Rod," instead of the inevitable "Mister," would have given that individual his earthly possessions cheerfully. But calling this solemn-visaged æsthetic Rod appealed to his fellow students about as much as addressing the president of the college as "Doc" would—so Rodney missed the thrill the nickname would have brought, and his soul became more bitter toward the unfeeling world in general.

Perhaps a month after Rodney's advent at Hicksville College, when the faculty and students alike had somewhat assimilated him, he selected a beauteous Sunday to squander recklessly somewhere off in the open country surrounding Hicksville. Having decided on the step, he went first to the railroad station and purchased five of his favorite newspapers from near-by big cities, four packages of the most devilish chocolate on sale at the stand—which he instantly picked out by the label, "Greatest Thing in the World for Sportsmen and *Athletes,*" and, thus provisioned, set out along the road that led away from the town.

Trudging along with his peculiar,

plodding gait, he ruminated gloomily over the incidents—or lack of them—that had filled in the brief space of his attendance at the school. It galled his sensitive soul that the students had not hazed him. With joyful anticipation he had looked forward every night to being thrown into horse troughs, decorated with, say, red paint, or made to roll peanuts about the campus with his ample nose. Many a night, as he kept his expectant vigil, he had started eagerly at some faint rustling, hoping that the plotters were about to pounce on him, only to sink back again in his cot, calling down dire misfortune on the frolicsome feline or gamboling dog that had raised and dashed his fond hopes.

The studied respect shown him by the professors in the various classes filled him with impotent rage. Questions, when put to him in open class, were accompanied with an irritating indulgence. The instructor would say:

"Ah, Mr. Benham, if you please, who was Caius Marius?"

The inflection of the tone would say very plainly: "How easy this must all be for your wonderful brain—show these inferior classmates of yours what nature has endowed you with!"

And Rodney, coloring brightly, would raise his long frame upward and outward, praying for moral courage to confess ignorance of Caius—and give the ancient gentleman's pedigree from cradle to the grave! The professor, catching possibly two syllables of Rodney's utterance, would turn to the class triumphantly and say:

"Quite so—you see?"

Rodney, slumping back noisily in his seat, would note every one of the venomous glances directed at him by the rest of the class.

When he was sure he was well out of sight of the town of Hicksville, Rodney tucked the papers up under his arm, aggressively bit off a piece of chocolate, and, pulling his hat down tight over his head, set off at what, according to the "Athlete's Manual," was the correct pace for the aspiring marathoner. He had covered perhaps half a mile in this fashion when his interior mechanism, which was not exactly constructed according to the specifications laid down in the manual, protested with such vigor that he was forced to halt. He did so reluctantly, flinging himself down by the roadside. A field almost directly opposite caught his roving glance and held it, until, satisfied by a casual inspection, he rose, and, crossing over, climbed laboriously over the protecting fence and deposited his tired form under the first tree.

For the best part of the next hour Rodney lolled at ease under the sheltering branches and reveled in the sporting sections of his newspapers. The delight that filled his soul at the news that Kid O'Brien had knocked out Young Edwards was equaled by the joy that came with the vividly narrated thirteen-inning victory of the Giants over the Cubs. This, thought Rodney, was real literature, and he disgustedly hurled away a colored magazine section telling of the wonderful archæological discoveries made along the upper Nile by Professor Boniface Pindar.

Having completed his mental feast, he folded the papers up carefully, arose, and, after a sweeping survey of the horizon, removed his hat, coat, and vest. From the hip pocket of his trousers he took a small, red-covered book, on which, in flaring type, three words stood out. They were, "How to Box."

A passer-by coming upon Rodney within the next fifteen minutes would have dashed madly for Hicksville and notified the local insane asylum that their prize exhibit had escaped—for Rodney was giving the inoffensive tree what, according to Chapter VI. of "How to Box," was a terrible lacing. Right crosses, left jabs, swings, and up-

percuts grazed the sides of the sturdy oak as Rodney went through the paces set down in the book. At length, when he had worked himself into a veritable frenzy, he delivered the knock-out—inadvertently scraping the knuckles of his left hand, and then stood by, panting proudly, the plaudits of the imaginary throng singing in his ears.

Having held the heroic pose for several minutes, he fumbled in his coat and produced another book, this one plain and black, of the memorandum variety. Thumbing the pages with care, he stopped at one, and, with a fountain pen presented to him at high school for excellence in Greek translation, he inscribed a small check mark opposite: "Boxing, fifteen minutes." Then he raptly admired his biceps for a minute and sat down again under the tree.

It was quite warm, so Rodney, after deliberating on the subject, removed his outer shirt, and, while in the act of folding it carefully with the newspapers, a wild idea surged through his brain. He did not know it at the time, but it was opportunity knocking tentatively at his door. Still he sat erect and considered the sudden thought with some interest. A playful breeze capering across his bared shoulders set his blood tingling and helped the idea along. With swift-coming determination he sprang up and patrolled the field for a distance of perhaps forty yards—no one had crept up on him unobserved, he was still alone. With an excited little chuckle, Rodney removed his trousers and stood forth in the nearest thing to a full-fledged athletic uniform he had ever worn—his X Y Z underwear!

Once Rodney had gone to a photographer's in a low part of the town, and, attired as he was now, had inscribed a big capital "H" in red ink upon the bosom of his—er—improvised jersey. Then he had his picture taken, to the consternation of the unimaginative photographer. This photo Rodney kept buried in the bottom of his trunk, to be dragged out and admired every night before retiring. He never carried it with him for fear some highwayman would seize it, rather than his watch or money.

So now Rodney cavorted around for a moment, until, facing a near-by fence, he ran forward with a burst of speed, lifted his cumbersome body from the ground at the approved distance, and—crashed down on the top rail. Undaunted, he essayed the feat again and again—and on the fifth trial he cleared it, stumbling awkwardly but triumphantly on the other side. Flushed with victory, he turned for fresh conquests, and then—he heard a sound that froze the blood in his veins. He knew his heart had stopped beating and the regulation cold perspiration stood out on his forehead. Every nerve tense, he stood listening, and the sound was repeated.

It was a giggle!

The tree where Rodney had left his clothing was possibly fifty yards away; yet Rodney felt he could never cover the distance in his span of years on earth. But, lifting his generous feet from the grass, he ran like a winged Mercury for the oak. He made it and frantically grasped his trousers, but, after four trials, he discovered that it was practically impossible to get both limbs in one aperture of the garment, so he steadied himself and got them on just as—well, she was the most beautiful being *Rodney* had ever seen, so what matters her comparative charms?

She advanced, smiling demurely upon the trembling Rodney, who longed for wings. When she was close enough for her voice to carry, she spoke, turning the full battery of her remarkable attractions on her helpless victim:

"I hope I haven't disturbed you?" There was half a question, half an apology in her inflection.

"Eh?" said Rodney. "Oh, of course not! That is to say, certainly not—not at all!"

He stopped, floundering hopelessly, and reached down a spasmodic hand for his coat, which he flung hastily over his shoulders. To his great dismay, the girl seated herself comfortably on the grass at his feet and appraised him with a pair of speculative eyes.

"You're from the college, aren't you?" she inquired, after a pause.

When she had repeated her question a trifle sharply, Rodney's voice became more amenable to his wishes.

"Yes, ma'am!" he answered, as though he were admitting himself guilty of setting fire to the orphan asylum. "I'm from the college, and I guess—I'll—I'll—be going back there now!"

He didn't say, "They'll probably be looking for me"—but he looked it.

"Oh, no!" cried the girl, in fascinating alarm. "You mustn't let *me* drive you away! I'll—I'll go and you stay—only I thought you might let me watch you train for a while. I'm just crazy about athletics!" she finished, with a burst of frank enthusiasm.

Some of the panicky feeling left Rodney, and he looked at her with growing interest—in the looking their eyes met for a fleeting instant, and it was hers that fell. Her technique was perfect.

"My name is Campbell," she volunteered, as Rodney made no comment; "Alice Campbell."

Rodney was called out of his momentary trance by the gentle clearing of her throat, and, with something of an effort he tore his eyes from her face and said:

"Oh—er—thank you!"

He removed the coat from his shoulders after stepping around the other side of the tree modestly, and struggled into it. He buttoned it carefully, and, stooping for his bundle of newspapers, discovered his shirt, reclining gracefully beneath the tree where he had put it a half hour before. The girl followed his glance and laughed merrily, which was no great aid to Rodney in recovering his poise. But he manfully rolled the garment up and stuck it, bulging, in a pocket of his coat—then he turned awkwardly to the girl.

"Well," he said, with a brave attempt at ease, "I guess I'll be going—I—I—good-by!"

And quite ungallantly he started off at a brisk pace across the field.

The girl gasped indignantly at his rudeness, and a frown crinkled the corners of the violet eyes. The little fiery pools there burned brightly for a moment, and then, as she stared after the retreating Rodney, the impending storm passed swiftly, driven to flight by a smile as radiant as ever adorned a magazine cover. Without rising from the ground, she suddenly raised both hands to her mouth, spreading the fingers out fanwise.

"Mister—jumper!" she megaphoned at Rodney's fast-vanishing back.

Rodney halted and turned inquiringly. The girl beckoned to him, and, considering an instant, he retraced his steps with patent reluctance.

"Well?" he demanded sternly, coming abreast of her.

For answer the girl burst into a peal of merry laughter, unmindful of the dull-red glow that slowly spread itself over Rodney's face. She shot a quick glance at him and then pointed to the base of the tree.

"You forgot your shoes and stockings!" she giggled, reveling in the consternation that now totally engulfed Rodney. He glared at her for an instant and then stooped down for the pedal coverings, mumbling inarticulately under his breath. He stood uncertainly for a moment, and then sat down, and, with his back unchivalrously turned to the lady, pulled the

shoes and stockings viciously on his feet.

"My, you have a strong back, haven't you?" came in admiring tones over his shoulder.

The first four buttons on Rodney's coat strained dangerously at their fastenings; unconsciously he sat more erect while lacing the left shoe. He stood up finally, facing the girl, carelessly allowing his chest to expand to its full twenty-nine inches. Her admiration was so open, it was really a shame that it was studied.

"Oh, how I wish I were a man!" went on Rodney's siren, looking up at him wistfully. "How perfectly thrilling it must be to—to—" (she groped for an illustration) "well, to run a hundred yards in eleven seconds!" she finished lamely.

"Nine and three-fifths seconds is the world's record," Rodney corrected her calmly. "Made by D. J. Kelly, June 23d, 1906. Although I have heard it said that other runners have equaled that time—I doubt it."

"I suppose *you* could do it in a great deal less than that, couldn't you?" asked the girl, her face as serious as Rodney's.

He glanced down at her sharply, but her expression was as innocent as she meant it to be.

"Well," he hesitated an instant, "I—I wouldn't say a *great* deal less!" he confessed.

His companion sighed and plucked idly at a blade of grass—she raised her eyes to Rodney's face.

"I'm afraid you're too modest," she said. "But all really *big* persons are, aren't they?"

Rodney's half nod was delicious. The girl arose, and Rodney looked long, not wisely, and too well, feeling something like he had on that memorable evening when Kid Murphy had knocked out Young Baker. He cleared his throat noisily and held his ground.

"Are you—do you live near the college?" he asked, amazed at his own temerity.

The girl regarded him with an expression that to Rodney was inscrutable, as she nodded her head affirmatively. He dove a hand in a pocket of his coat and produced an unbroken package of the chocolate beloved of sportsmen and athletes, extending it to his fair companion.

"This is really very fine," he assured her, disregarding her amused stare. "You can chew on it as we walk back!"

The peculiar sparkle in the girl's eyes was quite lost on Rodney, who gravely extended his arm.

"My name is Rodney Hatch Benham," he informed her, as he assisted her over the railing out of the field. "My—er—friends call me Rod!"

At what the newspapers and moving pictures designate as "a late hour" that night, Rodney arose from the cot in his modest boarding house for the fifteenth time and lit the gas. He took up a position near the open window, hoping that the cool night air would cure the strange insomnia that had attacked him following hard on his experience of the afternoon. He was alone with his thoughts, and, like twin armies of demons, they marshaled themselves and gave each other battle in his throbbing brain. He went back slowly over the events of the afternoon, skipped over the meeting, came to the parting, and—shuddered. He wished himself so far away from Hicksville College that the mileage would strain the pocket of a Midas.

And all because of Alice Campbell!

In common with Adam, Marc Antony, Henry VIII., and—er—lesser celebrities, a woman had been his downfall. For Rodney, falling an easy victim to the insidious charms of Alice—her admiring interest and unusual knowledge of things athletic—had

poured forth a story of deeds of prowess on the fields of sport that made Hercules seem like an awkward weakling by comparison! Why?—Rodney himself could not have told you. Mayhap it was because she was the first person he had met who would carry on a protracted conversation with him on the topic that was the very theme of his existence. Others smiled indulgently when he mentioned it—their features expressing eloquently what little they thought Rodney must know of such things. But here was one who not only listened respectfully, but demanded more, with an appetite that appeared unsatiable, and Rodney, casting caution to the winds, went deeper and deeper, leaping from a tale of how he saved the day in the eleventh inning with two men on base, two out, and the score tied, to how again he shattered records at putting the shot and throwing the—er—discus.

It had been a wild debauch—a night out for his soul! And now, in the quiet of his room, Rodney felt indeed like the morning after. The athletic season at Hicksville College would soon be well under way, and he would have to make good on his extraordinary record, because—well, Rodney was young and Alice was beautiful!

For the next two months coaches of the various teams representing Hicksville College were harried to exasperation by a tall, abnormally thin youth, who clamored insistently for "a chance." Rodney did not get his chance—just then, but he did get a display of emotions that ran the gamut from hysterical anger to downright, galling amusement. He invested quite a respectable sum in a uniform for each particular sport mentioned in the "Athlete's Manual," and they hung all summer in solemn rows in his closet, unsoiled, uncreased.

Along toward the fag end of the summer, a bright ray of sunshine lifted the gloom that hung about Rodney for a period of two weeks. "Chip" Edwards, captain of the baseball team, participated in a coin-matching contest with the leaders of the other teams representing the college. The object was to decide who would give Rodney a position of some kind on their particular team and thus free the others from his insistence. Chip lost the ultimate toss, and for two blissful weeks Rodney wore the uniform of the college nine and participated in four games—from a position near the end on the players' bench.

Rodney had met the fair Alice Campbell many times since that fateful Sunday in the country, incidentally discovering that she was the daughter of Professor Angus Campbell, ancient and modern languages. His resultant devotion to those branches of learning became so marked as to cause the parent of Alice to publicly commend him for his showing during the fall examinations, which ruined any faint chance he might have had of being hailed by his fellows as "Rod."

Following the baseball fiasco, Rodney was driven almost to desperation by his failure to astound the world with his athletic prowess—and the fact that Alice came twice weekly to the college to visit her father—thereby accidentally meeting him at the south gate. So he resorted to a more or less ingenious plan to account for his failure to shine on track and field. He began by elaborately bandaging his right arm—later shifting to an ankle, a knee, or both. This, he would explain to the sympathetic Alice, was the result of an unfortunate accident in training and the only thing that prevented him from breaking more records.

But, unlike eternity, this deception could not go on forever, and, before Rodney could think of another one, it was penetrated—acting as a sort of boomerang, it was its own undoing.

Glancing out of his window one afternoon, he espied Alice approaching the south gate at a swift pace. He slammed down the window, tore out his faithful roll of gauze, and hastily bandaged his left arm. Grown careless by his success, as is ever the way, he did not for the moment remember that the day before it was the *right* limb that had rested in the sling. A bandage of *some* kind was absolutely necessary, because the next day there was to be a track meet with Hicksville College's bitterest rival.

Alice greeted Rodney cordially, and then, glancing sympathetically at his bandaged arm, inquired demurely if the *other* one was better. Rodney, caught fairly, displayed a woeful lack of technique, blushed and floundered—and Alice saw a great light!

The parting had been chilly.

For the balance of the summer and on into the early fall Rodney gloomily, but nevertheless assiduously, devoted himself to his studies. He appeared to have fallen at last into the niche that his physical attributes made inevitable. The coaches went unharried and the faculty beamed when his name was mentioned—yet the old fire still smoldered in his breast. The twin ambitions of his life burned within him as strongly as ever. First that the day would come when he could marshal together sufficient courage to stand right up in class when asked a question and answer boldly, "I don't know!" and, second, that just before he left this vale of tears and Alice Campbells, some one would slap him on the back and call him "Rod." Yet even these humble desires were beyond his grasp—his answers came unfailingly and so correctly that he earned almost perfect marks, and the most undignified curtailing of his name stopped at "Benham."

As for Alice—sometimes when she passed him she nodded coldly, most times she just passed. But the most crushing blow was when Rodney heard it rumored that Jack Niles, captain of the football eleven, had taken her to the Gamma Delta Epsilon hop.

When he had verified that rumor, Rodney went to his room, locked the door, sat down on his cot, and reviewed his career from as far back as he cared to remember up until Jack Niles took Alice Campbell to the Gamma Delta Epsilon hop. He found it quite dull and uninteresting, yet it strengthened his sudden resolve. From the bottom drawer of the bureau he took his beloved photograph—the one that revealed him in the improvised athletic suit with the big crimson "H" on the shirt. His heart beat a little more rapidly as he grasped it firmly and tore it across—but the deed was done. One by one the manuals on various sports received the same treatment, until there was a neat little pile on the floor. The little black memorandum book, in which he checked off his daily exercises, was the last to go, and, had you seen Rodney's face as he wrapped the remnants up in an old newspaper, you would have thought him the last survivor of some terrible, soul-gripping catastrophe—and, after all, it was!

In a far, secluded corner of the campus, Rodney made a bonfire of his once most cherished possessions a half hour later. When the last flare had died down, he kicked the ashes to the winds, pulled his cap down tight over his head, and, with chest stuck out at an aggressive angle, strode briskly to Briggs Hall. He marched boldly up the steps and passed on inside, looking neither to right nor left until he had reached his goal. He stopped in front of the bulletin board, glancing covertly around as he adjusted his tortoise-rimmed glasses. Then he stepped close to the board eagerly. Yes, it was still there—that notice he had seen Jack Niles paste there that morning. He read it, half aloud:

We need more material for the football team! Those who want a chance to get in the game with Gratton University, report to me at three this afternoon.

JACK NILES, Capt.

Rodney gritted his jaw and looked at his watch. It was two minutes of three.

Well—he'd have to run to make it!

II.

"You're a fine bunch! You couldn't beat a high-school team! A lot of mollycoddled mamma's boys!"

"Jimmy" Andrews, coach of the Hicksville College eleven, thus pleasantly addressed his charges as they stood tremblingly herded together in the narrow dressing room under the stands. Through the partly opened door came the mingled sounds of Hicksville's twenty-one-piece band and the dull murmur of the throng packed tightly on the benches above. The murmur was indeed dull from the Hicksville side of the field, but the crazy, yelling cohorts of Gratton, massed together in the opposite stands, made up in volume and enthusiasm for the somewhat perfunctory cheers of their rivals. It was just before the final period, and the score stood, Hicksville 3, Gratton 9. Hicksville had scored a lone field goal —the mighty toe of Captain Jack Niles having risen to the emergency in the first period. Gratton had not only equaled this feat, but had hurled their full back over the line for a touchdown as well.

Although Coach Andrews had pleaded with the battered Hicksville eleven with an eloquence that would have won any other cause and browbeaten them until Simon Legree would have appeared a well-mannered master by comparison, they could do nothing to hold back the fierce attacks of the heavier Gratton line—and in the second period, Captain Niles had been banished from the game by a stern official who happened to be looking when the Hicksville leader swung on a rival player's nose.

There was no response now to the tirade which Andrews hurled at them, but their grim, set young faces spoke more forcefully than words. One would have thought them about to engage in some desperate enterprise as they filed out on the gridiron for the last ten minutes of play. Their faithful followers immediately set up a wild cheering, and the band blared out loudly, rending the air with the strains of a popular melody. But when the Gratton eleven trotted out, with springy step and confident air, the stands fairly rocked under the pandemonium.

It was Hicksville's ball in midfield, and the opposing elevens lined up—twenty-two husky young animals eager to be at each other—each showing the tense emotion that gripped him, according to his mold.

A forward pass brought the ball to Gratton's fifty-yard line—a line plunge by Hillman, the giant full back, yielded five more precious yards, and then the quarter back went around Gratton's left end for another five-yard gain, sending the Hicksville stands into deafening paroxysms of joy.

But although a thousand odd, husky lungs pleaded for the touchdown that would win the game, and eleven husky bodies tried desperately to batter down the Gratton line, not another inch could be gained. Their opponents seemed suddenly to have changed from flesh and blood to an impregnable stone wall against which the Hicksville eleven hurled themselves impotently. The quarter back hopelessly signaled for a kick, but before he could pass the ball to the full back he was brushed aside by the rush of the Gratton tackles, who nailed their man and blocked the kick with their agile bodies. The ball rolled uncertainly back before the Hicksville quarter back, who flung himself prostrate on it, then started up. In an in-

stant he was buried under a good half of the Gratton team.

The referee's whistle blew shrilly, and the confused tangle on the ground straightened out, the players falling back into their positions. That is, all but one; the Hicksville quarter back lay very still and grotesquely twisted where he had fallen.

While the injured player was being borne tenderly from the field, Jimmy Andrews strode up and down before the Hicksville bench, raving incoherently. A deep gloom had fallen over that side of the field, while defiant yells came hurtling across from the other. A rubber came running up to Andrews and panted:

"It's his left arm—outside of that he's all right—wants to get back in the game!"

Andrews turned away from him savagely.

"Ye gods!" he ejaculated. "We had a chance until Wainright was knocked out; now, good night!"

A tall, thin, gloomy individual arose from the bench at this moment, drew a deep breath, and advanced on Jimmy Andrews. Reaching the latter's side, he coughed apologetically, and Andrews turned on him peevishly.

"Well?" he snapped, taking in the other with a swift glance.

"I'm Benham, of——" began the lanky one.

"Heh? Oh, I can't bother with you now," Andrews interrupted roughly. "We've got four minutes to go, man, and——"

The other's manner changed until it closely resembled the coach's. His diffident air fell away like a cloak, and, turning swiftly, he snatched a nose guard from an indignant substitute, pulled it over his head, and swung the astounded coach around until he faced him again.

"Somebody has to go in there!" He shot the words out like bullets. "I know the signals; I've studied them for weeks; let me go in for Wainright and I'll work a play that will beat them!"

If the coach made any response to Rodney's plea Rodney did not hear it; for, grasping the indecision in the other's face, he turned and ran out on the field before the coach could halt him. The referee blew his whistle, and the game was on again.

When Rodney fell into position with the rest of the team, who stared at him wonderingly, his heart was pounding against his ribs so vigorously that he confidently expected it to burst through at any moment. His hands trembled as he braced them against his knees; his brain was a whirlpool of conflicting emotions. The "play" he had assured Andrews would win the game had been simply a wild bluff to get him his chance. He knew of no play that would win or otherwise. To his horror he realized that he had forgotten the signals; in the state he was in it is not improbable that he would have forgotten his very name.

"Come on, you dub! What's the matter? We haven't got all day!"

Rodney started out of his trance at the admonition, coming somewhere from behind. He gritted his teeth with sudden resolve, and bent over; he remembered that "56—87—Y" tacked on the end of any other signal stood for "pass the ball."

"Fifty-six, eighty-seven, Y!" he shot out suddenly. "Let it come!"

Before the center grasped the unfamiliar shortness of the signal he had slipped the oval back to Rodney, impelled almost involuntarily, and the amazed yell that went up from the rest of the team was lost in the din that followed. For Rodney, catching the pass, tucked the ball tightly under one arm, and, disdaining the protection of his interference, leaped forward at an angle, and was off for the Gratton goal posts, the pack at his heels.

The captain of the Hicksville track team, just before going insane with joy in the grand stand, reproved himself at having overlooked this speed marvel before. Rodney fairly flew over the gridiron, his long, thin legs moving like the piston rods on a fast locomotive. Five yards from the Gratton goal line, Nature, who had evidently been lost in admiration of Rodney's speed up to this time, now stepped in and claimed her due. Sharp pains shot up through Rodney's side, his choking breath fought to escape, but he kept on, though with slackening speed.

A warning yell went up from the Hicksville stands, but Rodney did not hear it, and the Gratton tackle, almost at his heels, cast himself in a wild lunge through the air, his groping arms finding and fastening themselves on Rodney's flying legs. It was on the one-yard line that they both crashed to earth, and Rodney, with a last convulsive wiggle of his tortured body, spat the dirt from his mouth, and wormed his way over the goal line, dragging the Gratton tackle with him.

About one thousand friends, relatives, and acquaintances of the Hicksville student body went temporarily insane at that moment, and part of the upper tier of the grand stand strained at the fastenings. The goal was kicked; and just as the score was hung up—Hicksville 10, Gratton 9—Miss Alice Campbell turned to her escort, Jack Niles, late star of the football team, and murmured:

"Didn't I tell you Rod would do it?"

She arose and stepped to the edge of the box; there was a dreamy look in her eyes.

"You'll excuse me, won't you?" she said, gazing somewhere beyond her escort. "I—I want to congratulate Rod!"

III.

It was two days afterward. Hicksville had not quite done celebrating, but classes were going on as usual. In a lecture room, Professor Pilkington was examining a class of very hoarse young men who had left their voices on the gridiron two days before. Twenty-five students were looking at him with one eye, while the other was fastened on a tall, thin, gloomy individual with a bandage around his head and a little, square, black patch over one eye. There was not admiration in their glances—it was adoration.

"While on this subject," began Professor Pilkington, "while on this—ah—subject, perhaps Mr. Benham can tell us when Alexander the Great entered Parthia?"

He paused expectantly, and Rodney, with some difficulty, extricated his bruised body from behind his desk, standing awkwardly, considering the professor with his one good eye, the inevitable correct answer coming to his lips.

A batch of freshmen came by the open window, bound to a lecture on philosophy. They stopped with one accord outside, fell together in a wide circle, and then——

"A locomotive for *Rod!*" shouted one.

The response rattled the glass in the window, not to say the dignity of the professor. Rodney's good eye glistened; it gleamed with a strange light; he didn't hear the cheers; he heard only the *"Rod."* One ambition of his life had been realized.

Professor Pilkington tapped sharply on the desk with a ruler.

"Come, Mr. Benham!" he commanded testily. "When did Alexander the Great enter Parthia?"

Rodney, pulled out of his blissful trance, gazed at him reproachfully, and achieved the other of his twin desires.

"Search me!" he drawled, and his cycle was complete.

Wings of the Wind

By Robert Welles Ritchie

Author of "The Sandlotter," "Wung," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST PART

Four days out from Rio the British ship *Castle Drummoch* is held up by the German cruiser *Karlsruhe*. The passengers are taken aboard the cruiser and the *Castle Drummoch* is sunk. The *Karlsruhe* slips away from an English warship; but realizing that danger is imminent and not wishing to risk the lives of non-combatants the cruiser's commander determines to put the passengers and crew of the *Drummoch* ashore on the desert island of Trinidad off the Brazilian coast. Tents, blankets, and supplies for a month are loaded in boats and taken safely to the island. The passengers follow, after their weapons have been confiscated. Among the passengers are: Cawthorne—the "I" of the story; "Pops" Bowles, well known on the Stock Exchange; his daughter Winifred Bowles; and Ford, the wireless man.

(A Two-part Novel—Part Two)

CHAPTER V.

OUR first night on Trinidad—in the dark a shot. Then a woman's scream, long-drawn and terrible. How I fought my way out of my blankets and bounded into the dim lane between the double row of tents I do not remember; the action was instinctive. With me was Strindberg, the Swedish naval attaché, my bunkie; he was murmuring: "Vat ess? Vat ess?" over and over again. Other shadows appeared at tent flaps, hesitant and ghostly. Sleep dropped from me like a shucked greatcoat, and an impulse of protection sent me diving back into the tent and to my bag, which had pillowed me this first night on Trinidad. I yanked it open and rummaged with both hands in desperate haste.

"Gone! My handy little automatic, dependable companion in more than one tight corner, was no longer with me. Gone, too, the box of thirty-eights to feed its chamber. I would not believe what my rummaging fingers told me. In the dark, my eyes could do nothing; but I whipped everything out of the bag and even shook it in vain hope that the wholesome rattle of metal against leather would reassure me. No, the automatic had disappeared; yet I had carefully wrapped it in a towel and stowed it at the bottom of the bag the day we left the *Castle Drummoch*.

I cannot tell you what a sinking feeling I had the instant of this discovery. But the patter of bare feet and sound of voices outside the tent tugged me thither, and for a good many minutes the loss of the automatic was forgotten. Down at the far end of the tent lane a vague milling of strange shapes showed in the half light, heralding the first thought of dawn. Over a confused murmur of voices rose and fell the sound of a woman's wailing. I hastened to the spot. Pale, fear-distorted faces popped up before my eyes as I joined the group of scarecrows; women with blankets pulled over their shoulders clamored in three tongues; men pawed one another's back and barked questions, oblivious of flapping shirt tails. I trod on the bare toes of Ford, the wireless lad, and clapped him on the shoulders for information the instant I recognized him.

The first part of this novel appeared in the 7th November issue.

"M-murder!" he chattered. "A bloody murder to s-start off with."

"Who?" I demanded, shaking the boy roughly; he was beside himself with fear.

"All I know it's one o' them Argentinos. I hears the shot, an' am first here. A woman runs out yellin', 'Asesinato,' an' I hears the crash of somebody leggin' it away in the scrub. Not even a shadder did I see, though."

"Let me in here—let me pass!" I turned, and saw Captain Hanover, blanketed like a buck, vainly trying to push his way through the milling crowd to the tent flap about which the figures were jammed thickest. His plaint was fretful; he was like a short-legged schoolboy trying to get a look at a circus parade.

"Get back, there! Back to your tents, every blasted one of you!"

A sudden swirl in the crowd, and Radway, the first officer, wove his way through, elbows thrusting and big hands pushing men and women indiscriminately. As he pushed and shoved, he barked snappishly. Captain Hanover was one who fell under his strong hand.

"Look alive, there, Mr. Radway," he grunted. "I'm in command of this ship, you should remember!"

"Soon's you know this is no captain's bridge, but a bloody island, with murder an' robbery done before the first breakfast, you'll be the fitter to command, Captain Hanover," the first officer growled. "Passenger's shot dead in there—shot with his own gun—only gun on the island—while he was bein' robbed. Diamonds—gold watch, wife says. They wake up—man grabs thief just as he's goin' through the flap. Bang! Man gets it in the face, and thief breaks for the dark. There you are!"

"But, what—what——" the skipper began vaguely.

"Yes, what?" Radway snapped back. "What you goin' to do about it, if you're in command? Will you take steps—or shall I?"

Something lay under the surface in this exchange of words—something I did not altogether grasp. It looked to me like rank insubordination on the first officer's part, his bullying Captain Hanover that way. I expected to see Hanover land on him with a swift one to the jaw, but instead——

"You do whatever's necessary—for the present," he said, and moved away.

One thing Radway said shot home with me: "The only gun on the island"—the Argentino killed with his own gun while being robbed, and that the only one in our whole colony of castaways! What did he mean by that? Hanover, ship's captain; wouldn't he naturally be armed? His officers; why, I'd seen them at fire drill second day out from Rio, and each had a gun strapped to his belt. But mine—gone! If theirs were gone, too, who—where ——what?

I started to skirt the edge of the crowd, which still lingered, despite Radway's gruff orders to disperse. Hanover could tell me about this gun business; it was my right to know. A dozen faces I scrutinized in the sickly gray light; all were stamped with terror and bewilderment. Once I thought I caught sight of the fluffy head of Winifred Bowles, standing before a tent by the side of her father; but I was hardly presentable, and did not intrude. Finally I came upon the skipper sitting on a rock apart from the tent street. His blanket was hunched above his head like a cowl, his shoulders stooped forward, and the whole body of him seemed shrunken and somehow without backbone. He looked up as I stood before him, but did not speak.

"Captain, I've had a revolver stolen from me since we left the *Castle Drummoch*," I said. "Didn't notice the fact until just a few minutes ago, when I

thought I'd like to have my fingers around a good butt. Who do you suppose got away with it?"

"The Dutch," he replied lifelessly. The man seemed to be in a daze.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" I pressed him, riled at his short answer.

"I mean the Dutch—they took it," came the flat answer. "Took 'em all—except one—this one that's just killed a man. Not a firearm on the island now. Yes, one, and a murderer's got that." The man's head shrank still lower under the cowl of his blanket; his voice was that of a wheezy phonograph.

"Look here," I began hotly, "this is no time to fool, Captain Hanover. What are you driving at?"

"Ask Radway, and leave me alone," he whined, and not another word could I draw from him.

I did not ask Radway, but I got enlightenment from the wireless man, whom I found smoking a stubby pipe up by the embers of last night's cook fires. Embroidering his narrative with cuss words in two languages, he told how before we left the *Karlsruhe* her commander had caused officers and crew of the *Castle Drummoch* to be lined up on the gun deck and searched. Every box and kit belonging to them was rummaged.

"Some Dutch blighter must 'a' been hasty, an' missed just one gun," he added. "One was enough—that's the one did the trick down there just now."

Strindberg came to join us at the ashes of the cook fires, and with him, Baker, a ruddy-faced Northumberland chap, whom I had noted aboard the *Karlsruhe* as about the only one of our crew of waifs who could find a ready excuse to laugh at any provocation. We four sat there in the graying dawn and in undertones discussed what the night had brought forth, and what was the promise of the new day. I told them what I had heard pass between Radway and the captain, how the latter had wilted under the mastery of the raw-boned first officer. Ford recited again, with growing excitement, the details of the wholesale disarming aboard the German cruiser.

"Gentlemen," the Swede put in in his curiously accented speech, "if, as I suspect, the man with the revolver is a member of the crew, then trouble we have. A bad lot, that crew. Captain Hanover he is—how shall I say it?—his mind was put to sleep by the guns which sank his ship. And Radway has——"

None answered the unfinished question. That gaunt, silent fellow with the horse's face and eyes deep-set and moody, like the eyes of a very old horse—well, we had all seen enough of him to know that we knew nothing about him; could not predict how he would act in a crisis. And a crisis every man of us felt impending; the event of the night warned that before we left the island a test for nerves and grit was due to come. The very unholy mixture of bloods was enough to guarantee anything but a Chautauqua meeting on Trinidad. In the steerage division, fifty-one blacks and mahogany browns and dirty yellows—a typical South American third-class consignment; sixty men of the crew, fireroom gang, stewards, and deck hands, all but one recruited from the crimps' places in Liverpool and Southampton and that exception a coal-black lascar. Add to this mess twenty-eight cabin passengers of five or six nationalities, and you have our Babel Lodge No. 1 of Willing Ruffians of the World.

Dawn popped up over the sharp eastern rim of surrounding peaks like a four-alarm fire, and we, the cabin passengers, had our breakfast, perched on stones or sprawling in the grass around the improvised galley stove the cooks had thrown together out of built-up stones and a sheet-iron strip. Bacon

and coffee—nothing else. Three stewards served us, if you could call the slovenly spearing of frying bacon strips and slopping of coffee into mugs, service. One of them was the egg-headed Swivel Eye, who pattered in heedless slippers between fire and rough circle of stone seats, his ferret face set in a frozen smirk of servility and his oily tongue ready to click out a "Yes, sir; thank you, sir." A rumpled white jacket was buttoned over his undershirt—one missing button demonstrated the absence of anything more formal beneath; he wore no collar but a knotted red handkerchief. The man's whole get-up was a studied declaration of independence.

Oh, that was a sad meal! Every one of us, man and woman, felt the breath of tragedy still on our cheeks, wondered what the next day—the next hour—would bring forth. Lonesomeness and fear—the lonesomeness of the great water spaces all about and the nearer spiny crags fencing us in from the rest of the island; fear of the untried experience which that morning's sun had ushered in so shockingly; these sat down to meat with us all. Winifred Bowles and her father had come up to the rustic saloon after I had taken my plate and picked my rock; she took my seat with a silent "Thank you" in her eyes, and Pops lowered himself to a tailor's squat beside her. The girl was rigged as spick and span as for a stroll in Central Park; the only concession she had made to the informality of island life was that her head was uncovered. The sun beat upon it, jealous of the golden fire he kindled amid the heaped-up, feather-light locks. But there were shadows around her eyes; the mocking challenge of carefree youth was not in them.

I tried to talk commonplaces during the meal, not caring to allude to the weight oppressing us all while others were in earshot. She strove bravely to answer down to this trivial level, forced a little laugh now and then to prove her spirit. Her father nursed his own thoughts moodily, without an interruption.

"What is to come of this—what happened a little while ago?" she finally asked, after we had given our empty plates to Swivel Eye and walked a little away from the people about the cooking place. "What lies behind it?"

"Nothing we need worry about," I tried to answer indifferently. "A mere fight between one of the passengers and some fellow of the crew. Captain Hanover probably has taken steps already to get the man responsible."

"I would like to believe that is all," she said, facing me and looking squarely up at me. "But I know it is not. Please, Mr. Cawthorne, do not try to follow the rule of chivalry we practice back home; keeping knowledge of danger from the 'weaker sex.' You know we here on Trinidad are thrown back a thousand—two thousand—years. We're not different from the tent people who wandered with Moses in the Wilderness. The rule of life is just the same with us as with them—'the battle to the strong.' I have as much right to know the true situation as you—as any man here has. Now, tell me!"

It was like a judgment from the supreme court, that girl's simple declaration of our altered relationships and scheme of life stripped to the skin. She had put into words what I had only vaguely been conscious of. We were, indeed, right back in the days of the patriarchs—when Cain was abroad with a club in his hands. I told the little I had learned from Ford. She listened without questioning.

"Then," she said, when I had finished, "we are to be ruled by one revolver. The man who has that weapon is king."

"As long as he can keep it—yes," I answered.

"Somebody worthy must get possession of the revolver at once," Winifred continued. "Every minute it remains in the hands of the murderer increases our danger. Others of his kind will join him against the rest of us. Then ——" She spread out her hands with a gesture of helplessness.

"Wanted—a David to meet Kid Goliath, for a finish match," I ventured in feeble attempt at lightness.

"Yes," the girl assented, as she stepped a little closer and put her two hands lightly on my shoulders, "and I'll back David."

Just then we were summoned to the first town meeting—or was it a grand jury? The summons was given by one of the cooks standing on a rock and pounding a skillet with an iron spoon. Winifred and I retraced our steps, and were joined by groups of three and five coming from the tents and the crew's camp beyond. Pops Bowles, glimpsing his daughter from afar, came trundling fussily up to reprove her for straying from his side, "when everything's up in the air this way."

The gathering of that motley clan was as curious an assembly as might be. Dowdy, dark-skinned women, with hair awry and waists unbuttoned; slouching Argentino gentlemen smoking cigarillos; huskies from the fireroom squad, shirts open over hairy chests and in their eyes a bantering light of deviltry; Pops Bowles, with his spats and pink dome—here was a Noah's ark cargo waiting for the shipper's manifest. The Twelve Tribes in the desert, you might say, gathering to take orders from Moses.

But hardly the "Exodus" brand of lawgiver in this case. Captain Hanover, standing by the skillet pounder on top of a flat rock, waited our coming. Right at his feet sat the lanky figure of Radway, his head cocked over so that one hand could gently massage his left ear—a trick of his. His equine chin was drawn down in a long attempt at seriousness, but I thought I spotted in his shifting eyes a cold gleam of humor. The crew kept to themselves a little apart from the passengers. When we were all assembled, Hanover blew out his cheeks in a sudden access of anger, real or pretended, and jammed one fist into an opened palm. He began to bellow hollowly:

"As commander of this ship—um—that is, as commander what was, I take it my duty to punish the bloody murderer who killed a man before breakfast this morning. That man will step out and give himself up now; he can't hide; we're bound to get him."

Hanover paused and let his eye rove expectantly around the half circle of faces before him. A droll light of childish eagerness appeared on some of the faces of the crew; they cast covert glances at neighbors, wholly impersonal in character. The captain continued gustily:

"Of course, if you force me to, I'll have every man jack on this island searched, and when I find the gun on one of you it'll be worse for that one. In that case——"

"Beg pardon, Captain Hanover, but you will not search me, you know. I deny the right of any one to search me without proper warrant, and, of course, that is out of the question here. I mean to say, the warrant."

It was Hetherington, the English chess fiend. He looked up into Hanover's face with a self-contained and distant smile.

"What's that? Who says he won't be searched by a king's police officer?" Hanover spluttered.

"I say so, my dear fellow," came the Englishman's silky response. "Not a hand—not a finger—laid on me. King's officer you may be on your proper ship; granted. But you haven't any ship at present, and so—there you are! Not a policeman or Scotland Yard fellow

anywhere in sight; therefore, no search privilege."

Grins passed among the crew. Pops Bowles muttered something in my ear about "spilling the beans." I, furious, cursed the Englishman under my breath for an ass; through his blessed respect for custom and the oiled usages of law the idiot was cutting under our only symbol of government and order—old Hanover. As for the captain, he was fairly floored. The Englishman's appeal to law and regularity, the most sacred of Britain's totems, left him with his feet off the ground.

"Well—er—of course, Mister Hetherington," he stammered, "there may be something in what you say. But, as my remarks were addressed to the crew in particular—likely some swab of an oiler or a steward——"

"Beg parding, Cap'n 'Anover, sir"—Swivel-eye Hoskins pushed through the crowd and stepped a little ahead of his fellows. "Speakin' f'r me mytes, 'ere, an' not at all personal, yuh mawt sye; but don't th' syme rule o' search apply to one good Englishman syme as another? Meanin' no disrespeck, Hi arsks yuh man t' man."

"Why—why, you runt!" Hanover exploded. "What d'ye mean, the same rule of search?"

Swivel Eye stood his ground. "Hi mye be only a pot wussler an' a bleedin' bed myker, an' Hi may be a runt, as you 'as th' goodness to observe, Cap'n 'Anover, sir. But Hi'm a British citizen, Lor' love 'im, th' king, an' wot's law for this 'ere gentmun is law for Thomas Hoskins. Hi mykes bold to sye you won't search me, neither, Cap'n 'Anover, sir."

While Hanover stared, with goggling eyes, at Swivel Eye, Hetherington, like Balaam's ass, spoke again:

"Grassed! Jolly well grassed, Captain Hanover! The fellow's got right on his side, you know. Not that I care to appear as championing such a low person—I mean to say there's no answering his argument. You cannot search him more than me. Odd situation, now; isn't it?"

Hetherington was still chuckling vacuously, when something happened. Radway rose from his sitting posture on the rock below Hanover's feet, walked swiftly over, and struck the Englishman a blow squarely on the mouth, which knocked him flat. Then he turned to Hanover.

"Get down off that rock! You're not fit to command here," he growled. "We'll have open mutiny inside of a minute if this thing keeps up."

For a long minute Hanover's eyes, glassy against his mottled cheeks, tried to battle with Radway's, while we witless spectators held our breaths at the suddenness of the new event.

"Get down off that rock!" Radway repeated. Hanover wavered, tried to brace himself with a last summoning of the habit of command, then turned and stepped down to the level of the crowd. Radway was atop the rock in one stride.

"Now, no more chin music," he said, his own long chin outthrust pugnaciously. "I'm in command here, and what I say goes. Get back to your camp—you, Hoskins, and the whole bloody lot of you. And remember this: I know who fired that shot this morning. I know, but I'm not saying anything—now. I'll fire the next one!"

CHAPTER VI.

So we of Trinidad came to have Radway rule over us. There on that outland beach the primitive law of tribes operated exactly as it did in the babyhood of the human species before men came down from the trees. The strongest seized place of power. The rest of us, passengers and crew alike, had to bow to Radway because of his very audacity and our unpreparedness to combat him.

"I don't like that fellow's looks, nor his actions, either, Cawthorne," Pops Bowles grumbled, as we were leaving the scene of our first town meeting. Winifred, a little shaken but unwilling to show she had read the hint of crude brutality under the surface incident, had gone to her tent on the pretext of laying out to dry the contents of her grip, doused in the landing of the previous evening.

"Much that we do not like may happen on this island before we get off," I answered. "But for one thing, Radway will be better able to keep a tight hand on the crew than Hanover, and that's what we need right now."

"But you heard what he said about —about the shooting this morning. He knows who did it, and he'll fire the next shot. Not a word about punishing the murderer or even disarming him; instead, a threat of more shooting. That doesn't look right to me. We can't go on living in this hair-trigger style. There's but one thing for us to do. Get in touch with some of the decent men among the passengers, the reliable ones; have an understanding with them as to how we'll act together if anything breaks—any mutiny or murdering business. We've got to put brains against beef in this proposition, and I never saw a time yet when brains didn't win out in such a fight."

Pops' plan we put into action immediately. Strindberg, the quiet-spoken Swede, listened to our arguments and nodded his head in grave acceptance of the fellowship of defense we offered him. Baker, the jolly little Englishman, came in with us willingly. Ford, the wireless lad, whom I insisted upon including in our circle because he was the only one of the *Castle Drummoch's* officers besides Radway who showed the least indication of intelligence, hesitated to commit himself, though he plainly hated Radway as greatly as he feared him. But I won him to the promise that he'd be with us in case Radway proved crooked or incompetent to handle the crew.

Near noon they buried the murdered man. The grim burial was the last thing needed to drive my spirits down to the congealing point. When it was done I turned my back on the camp and set out to walk off my gloom. Anywhere to get away from this colony of humankind which had been dropped amid the thousand flowers of a virgin beach only to dye them with violence before the second sun had set.

The camp was pitched on a sloping plateau between a close circle of peaks and the sea. On either hand the mountains came down to plant their feet in the sea, hedging off the crescent beach with horns of rock; our plateau was a natural stockade from which there seemed no escape except by sea. Down from the bastions of the cliffs a little stream flowed through a meadow of purple lupines, and this I followed. As the ground rose to meet the base of the cliffs, the rivulet purled and chattered through a cool growth of tree ferns. Suddenly I bumped against the bounding wall of rock, where, in three leaps, the water came down from the lip of the cliff several hundred feet up. Standing where the spray showered me, I surveyed the rocky barrier, closing the sides of the little gorge like a sack.

It was not mere spirit of adventure that set me to hunting the mountain wall for a way up. In the back of my head a persistent thought gave me motive: "Some time, who knows, you and some of the others may find it healthy to leave camp. A way out would be a good thing to know."

Before long I discovered a possible lead upward. It was a dry watercourse, probably the overflow of the falls during the rainy season. Now it was nothing but a sort of fire escape—a rock fire escape set against the cliff for the wind ghosts of Trinidad

housed up among the spires. Just a succession of basalt ledges, one above the other, in a crack between two rock shoulders, and with talus heaps of shale between. The whole led to a plateau above, over the edge of which fronds of tree ferns hung like paper ruffles in a candy box.

A stiff climb! Just water-worn and pitted slabs of red and black stone for hand and footholds, and between the platforms of my fire escape the shifty, tricky scourings of winter rains. Coarse grass grew in sparse bunches in the rock crevices; these helped and deceived alternately, many of the scalplocks of green coming away when my weight was put on them. And it was blistering hot in that crack of the island's chapped fist; the sun made it a fireless cooker to parboil me.

Perhaps it was an hour's work before I won to the top and emerged in a jungle of scrub tree ferns, none as high as my head. Finding the stream and following it to its leap over the cliff's lip, I looked down on the prison cove of the camp, perhaps five hundred feet below. The tents were scattered white mushrooms, bounded by the white ribbon of the beach. Beyond that the crinkled blue silk of the ocean shone with foam lace at the line of the breakers. Desert—desert! Wonderful, colorful desert of rock and water!

I turned inland and pushed through the jungle growth of tree ferns toward two sentinel peaks rising from the near foreground. Not more than a few rods of the bush and I was, all of a sudden, out on a naked plain of rocks, free of all vegetation save here and there a clump of dwarf lupines. The plateau appeared to run roughly the length of the island, set round about with the spiked fence of the cathedral cliffs, whose feet were in the sea.

Marking the position of my point of exit with a pile of stones, I started to cross the plateau in its narrowest dimension. The plain was strewn with small bowlders, exceedingly rough in surface contour and sunbaked a gray-brown. A sense of loneliness, of swinging, unsupported, between star and star, grew on me until it became oppressive. I felt as if I were interrupting Jehovah at His unfinished work, had arrived, in fact, on that third day when He said, "'Let the dry land appear;' and it was so."

A thin spike of light, glancing from something highly reflective, struck my eye. It came from an apron of rock a little to my right. I stooped and picked up the thing which had glittered.

It was a shining, new machine bolt—a steel-headed and threaded inch-long bolt.

I stood dumbly turning over and over in my fingers the slender steel spindle. A machine bolt here in this wilderness of ocean-bound rock, naked and untouched as at the great upheaval and thrust of creation! Well, it was misplaced; I can say that much.

Perfunctorily at first, then with a concentration of purpose almost savage, I began searching the rocks and sparse patches of soil about me for other signs of a miracle—wheel tracks, footprints, anything to make the presence of that bolt plausible. If I did not find some supporting evidence I was almost ready to concede an hallucination. But not a trace of anything marking the passing of man could I find. Though I roved around and around in widening circles and even dropped to my knees occasionally to examine seams and crevices in the rocks, no clew as to how that shiny new bolt got there revealed itself.

I carried it almost reverently in my hand as I started to push again across the island. It was a sacred object—a button off the coat of Mystery.

Why I went legging it toward the crumpled peaks and spires bounding

the eastern edge of the plateau I did not seek to analyze then, nor do I know now. Except it was the vague notion that somewhere in the creases and crevices of the crags I would find the key to the puzzle. I was like a man in a haunted house who resolutely climbs the attic stairs to catch the ghost he hears pattering about there, but hopes he won't really see anything. The ground over which I walked now rose to the torn edge of the plateau where the crags stood sentinel over the sea. The plateau was like an apron pinned about on all sides with spikes and sagging in the middle.

I stopped to get my breath. A strong wind from the east bathed my dripping face. As I stood, moveless, in the vacuum silence a sound came to me down the wind. Faintly and fitfully, as the wind gusted, I heard a throbbing and a murmur.

The labor song of machinery!

No!—Yes! Undeniably. There was the smooth, throbbing *suff-suff* of the exhaust from a piston chamber, the thin whisper of belts in revolution. With the puffing and waning of the wind, the machine noise came and went illusively. Under its lure, I pushed on, though the sun was dropping close to the western rim of the plateau. Up a bold camel hump I clambered, to find myself confronted by a twisting chasm in the plateau's rim, leading downward; I could see a patch of the sea far below through the gap. Now I got the hum of the hidden machine fairly and strongly. No tricky gust of wind need carry it now. It was a steady throb-throb-throb—the beat of a steam-driven piston arm somewhere down there in the rock well.

An engine on Trinidad. Men on Trinidad besides ourselves of the castaway camp. One fact was the corollary of the other. I heard the engine; I could find the men if I wished. But why an engine here on this God-forsaken rock in the South Atlantic? What sort of men could they be, and what were they here for?

I went no farther, though a way to the beach, if there was a beach, seemed to lie open through the gorge ahead of me, similar to the fire escape up which I had climbed from the camp hours before. I hesitated for two reasons, one the setting sun and long backward trail; the other—most persuading—the fact I had no gun. The men who had picked Trinidad for a factory place had every reason to resent intrusion; that was certain. They would not welcome me, even if I managed to find my way down the gorge and walk into their secret engine room. If they already knew of the presence of a hundred and forty-odd maroons on the other side of the island, which was unlikely, they evidently preferred not to be friends. If they didn't know of our landing, would it be wise to challenge their bad will by revealing our presence? In short, would the fact there were others on Trinidad prove an added danger to our peace or develop a blessing in some unforeseen contingency?

These were questions I dared not try to answer. What with the day's shocks I was incapable of further speculation; my mind had been too badly flattened out by them to do any more constructive reasoning. One thing elated me: I was going back to the camp in the cove possessed of a secret which might prove to be as weighty and valuable a weapon as the hidden revolver. None need know unless I cared to tell that Trinidad was tenanted by others than the *Castle Drummoch's* refugees. My knowledge, which I resolved to increase by further exploration down the gorge at first opportunity, might come to be a handy thing in case of necessity.

My long shadow on the rock at my feet roused me from these speculations with a start. I saw over my shoulder the sun, big and red as a toy balloon,

about to duck behind the western fluting of Trinidad's pie crust. So I set out at top speed on the home trail, first making a mental map of the surrounding mountains and my camel-back hill at the gorge's head. It would take some stiff walking to make my fire escape and the camp before dark.

The droning of the hidden engine ceased abruptly as I turned away from the gorge, and I was once more alone in the immense silence of an undiscovered world. The dark came quickly and before I could gain the chute through the rocks behind camp. One minute a burning rim against the saw teeth of the crags; the next darkness. No twilight; no afterglow. Just the flicking off of light by some hand at the switch.

So night caught me a prisoner at the top of the fire escape and afraid to descend in the dark. To have made the attempt, tricky enough in the daylight, would have been to break my neck. There I was, stuck for the night on the island's balcony and terribly alone, as Kipling's Tomlinson in hell-gate flare. Far below me, the camp fires glowed like lights from another world.

It was irksome, this being trapped on the edge of space, with cold stars looking me over and the black shapes of peaks standing sentinel all about. Besides being mortally hungry, a deeper trouble stirred me. Down there among those hounds of the crew, still leashed, but straining at the leather, was a little bit of real girl, who had come these past few days to fill the biggest place in my life. Anything might happen this night—anything within the range of brute passions. There might be more slaying, an outbreak of lawlessness on the part of that Swivel-eye mongrel and all his tricky pack. Yet here was I helpless, though almost within call.

I smoked and walked, walked and smoked, restless and disturbed in mind. Always my dreary round of the plateau edge brought me to the brink, whence I could see the wavering fires below. The reassurance of their steady glow was something. But finally, after twenty-four hours at least seemed to have passed, the fires failed, died down to burning points, vanished. No light but that of the myriad stars. I gave up my pacing and stretched out, with my back against a rock, to think. Sleep must have come to me insensibly, for of a sudden I was jerked back to consciousness all standing.

A white club of light, the beam of a searchlight, lifted over the eastern rim of the island where I had been that afternoon. It swung from horizon to zenith once—twice—thrice; then winked out as suddenly as it had come.

From the direction of the searchlight beam sounded a faint humming and beat like ducks in flight. It grew thinner in volume—ceased.

CHAPTER VII.

When dawn came to me, alone between sea and sky, I knew that in a day and a night I had been tried by mystery's savage initiation and still remained blindfolded. But one deduction stood out from the surprising circumstances of the past eighteen hours on the plateau as clear and sharp as a new icicle: whoever had been inspired to bring to this barren bit of rock a power engine were acting in concert with others not on the island in furtherance of their inconceivable plan. Those three searchlight flashes were signals; but signals to whom? And for what purpose? Then, too, that new, higher, and more carrying note of the hidden machine that had come to my ears clear across the plateau just as the lights flashed; what of that? Fog of mystery at every turn. I was helpless to penetrate it.

With the first strong light, I made haste to scramble down the rock ladder of the gorge to the miniature jungle of tree ferns and so on to the camp. The cooks were at the fires; but, aside from a sleepy group of the crew huddled about the cooking place for the fo'c's'le crowd—for a chill was in the air, and the fires were gracious—nobody was stirring. The passengers were still behind the tent flaps. Famished from my marooning on the plateau, I went over to the crew's cook fire to get a cup of coffee, the pot there being already at the boil. A big, gawky fellow in a greasy apron gave it to me grudgingly. I explained to him by way of excuse for my eagerness that I had been caught by the night on top of the cliffs behind the camp. Several of the loungers overheard my remarks and pricked up their ears.

"Wot wuz you spyin' out up there, mister; a safe place to get away from Radway?" one of them asked, with a grin.

"No; what's the trouble with Radway?"

"Oho! 'E arsks wot's th' matter with Radway!" the sailor grunted, turning to the others, with a knowing lift of the eyebrows.

"Then you 'aven't 'eard yet?"

"Heard what?" My curiosity was fairly roused now. Of a sudden I realized that much could have transpired during the time I was alone with Trinidad's mystery upon the plateau.

"W'y, Radway, 'e——" the sailor began, when a slipshod little figure, with shirt flapping over the top of his trousers, ducked under his arm, whirled about, and gave him a hard flip with open hand across the lips.

"Stow yer guff! 'Ave yuh no decency? Carn't yuh see this 'ere's th' gentmun wot's 'specially interested, like Hi wuz tellin' of it to yuh yesterdye?"

The sailor grinned sheepishly and stepped back. Swivel-eye Hoskins, for he was the little rag-tag who had silenced the garrulous one, turned to me with apology spread on his mottled and weazened face. His skewed eye fixed me from a crazy angle.

"Yuh gotter overlook th' bad brykes o' such a 'oundsditch pick-me-up as that swipe, Mister—Cawthorne, is it, sir? 'E 'avin' no manners to speak abawt, sir. If hit's not persumin' in me, Mister Cawthorne, I arsks yuh t' tyke a little walk with me," he said, with a duck of the head. "We can 'ave a bit o' tork without a lot o' nuts wavin' ears at us."

I nodded, and Swivel Eye, with a weasellike twist of his body and duck of the head, led the way down the slope away from the group at the cook fire. There was in his manner a curious mixture of cool impudence and cringing respect.

Instead of getting to the point at once, he began to inveigh against the enormity of something Radway had done during my absence, with deliberate craft hinting at the personal interest I should have in the matter. The first officer, I gathered from his rambling preliminaries, had "come a awful cropper" with some one of the passengers and then "taken it out" on the crew, especially on Swivel Eye, with his fists and the toes of his boots. But the whining little weasel who trotted by my side as he walked down toward the beach would not be direct. Finally I stopped short, clapped him on the shoulder, and whirled him about to face me. His watery eyes blinked under the grip of my fingers.

"Now no more of this talky-talk!" I commanded. "What are you driving at?"

"Yuh mawt be more gentle an' fare as well," Swivel Eye snapped, with a sudden flashing of his rat teeth under drawn-back lips; then his cunning came back and he swung into his old wheedling whine:

"Yuh're a man quick t' anger, Mister Cawthorne, sir. I c'n see that with arf an eye. Arter I tells yuh wot's wot yuh'll be ready to haccept my present of a little snorker an' no questions asked."

"A little snorker," I echoed, mystified. "Talk English, Hoskins."

"A rose by hany other nyme, sir," the cockney snickered. "Hi means a pill shooter—a little automatic doctor wot 'as a steel nose an' smells most orful keen—a gun."

"Tell me the reason for my wanting a gun and we'll talk about getting one afterward," I said, so absorbed in learning what lay behind all this circumlocution that for the minute I did not catch the significance of Swivel Eye's offering me a gun—*the* gun.

He told me, then, with much detail. At the noon meal yesterday Radway had "fair bent himself double mykin' up to th' little American lydie." Then, at the night gathering around the cook fires, Radway had again forced his attentions on Winifred, had laughed at "'er fussy old dad" when he objected, and when the girl started to walk away from the fire had followed her.

"'Ave a check on yourself, Mister Cawthorne," the cockney continued, eying my burning cheeks with a sidelong glance. "But th' fac' is Radway slips an arm abawt th' little lydie's waist an' tried to land a kiss on 'er pretty mouth."

"What then?" I asked, very low.

"Ow! She 'ands him a bitter smack with 'er little 'and. Then Radway 'e goes stridin' off to w'ere th' innercent crew is 'avin' their chow and starts to stryke abawt 'im with boot an' fist. 'E's boilin' with rage, 'e is.

"So I arsks yuh again, does yuh want a little snorker, wot Hi knows w'ere it can be found?"

It cannot be put down in cold type—what I felt when Swivel Eye finished. Nobody can lay his hand in the blue flame of a blowpipe and calmly dissect his agony. A blue flame was shooting into my brain, and under its goad I acted madly. Not until it was too late, when I had time to realize how, in my heat, I had missed a great opportunity, did I understand how crazily my rage drove me. For it was against this smirking, sniveling little dock rat, who doubtless had been filled with glee to see the insult Radway put upon Winifred, that my first hot resentment turned. So his cards were played, eh? So he had cleverly seized the moment to drive me to a murder frenzy—was ready to slip a revolver into my hand at the time I saw red so I might kill the man he wanted out of the way. That was his game!

I whirled on the cockney, and speech boiled from me:

"You poisonous little bug! Vamose before I land on you! Me—you want me to do your dirty work, eh? Well, fists will be good enough for me—not guns!"

Swivel-eye's jaw dropped in amazement. Then a wicked gleam shot from his eyes and scorn twisted his slit of a mouth.

"A proper gentmun—you!" he piped, his voice shaking with rage. "Aw, yes, a proper gentmun! Hi goes out o' me wye t' tell yuh sumpin wot yuh orter know an' wot do Hi get? A kick in th' pants!"

Swivel Eye suggested his reward. I grabbed him, headed him back toward the cook fire, and launched him speedily forward with just the form of persuader he had named. My act was almost automatic, done without thought and in a flash of insane anger. Swivel Eye went flying down into the lupines; he scrabbled around for a rock, which he sent whizzing past my ear, then scuttered up the slope. A wonderful volley of profanity came rattling back over his shoulder. Then, the next instant, sanity returned to me and realization

of a missed opportunity hit me like the kick-back of an auto crank.

Fool! Double-plated and copper-riveted fool! There I had stood while offer of that all-powerful and mysterious revolver was made and had ignored it entirely. The weapon which made its possessor king on Trinidad had been almost in my hand—one word and I would have had it. Not to have used it on Radway—no; but to have had it out of the possession of the slinking little Swivel Eye, undoubted murderer: there lay the advantage I had blindly passed over. In my crazy, bull-charging wrath I had tossed opportunity aside and incidentally acquired a vindictive and dangerous enemy in Swivel-eye Hoskins. The moment had been mine to be master of the camp; instead, I had chosen to remain on the plane of bare fists under the domination of brutal steel.

A half hour later I saw Winifred. She came up the tent lane toward the passengers' salon—that select circle of bowlders at the end of the canvas street—alone. In the fresh golden light of the new day, she was as radiant and crisply beautiful as any of the dew-jeweled spikes of blue under her feet. Hatless, her glory of hair was like a web of spun sunbeams about her head. Her sailor blouse, if that's what women call those free and breezy creations of white and blue, was open at the throat, and the ruddy tints of the just-risen sun played on the round, firm column of her neck. The free swing of her shoulder and the fine buoyancy of her stride as her brown-booted feet pressed down the flower clubs were to me the rhythm of a song—a song of the new day in the youth of the world.

She saw me hurrying toward her and came to meet me, with a little catch of breathlessness in her voice:

"You—you! I thought—I was afraid something had happened to you, Mr. Cawthorne!"

"Something did happen—a great deal, in fact," I answered. The touch of her cool hands, which impulsively she laid in mine, was tonic. "I have much to tell you when—when——" I could not bring myself to question her in verification of what Swivel Eye had told me. It seemed a stain on the morning's freshness to have her recall the shameful incident of the night before. Yet I felt I must have from her lips the story of Radway's insult before I could decide on a course of action. And decide I must at once, before I met him.

"When you disappeared yesterday, Mr. Cawthorne," Winifred was saying, "and were not back in camp at dark, Pops and I began to worry—tremendously. You are—well, there are so few of us here on the island—the sort we could really count on in an emergency. And to-day, when poor old Pops is down on his back—the seven devils of rheumatism; they came with poor Pops', ducking in the surf, I suppose—and I was all alone, why—why, finding you back and safe is just—comfortable, that's all. Tell me where you've been."

"You were going to breakfast alone, then?" I asked, ignoring her eager question. She gave me a startled look, and her answer was hesitating:

"Why not? I must take Pops' breakfast to him. There is nobody but me to wait on him, and—and——" Her eyes asked a question. I blurted out what was heavy in my mind:

"Miss Bowles, I'd rather you'd stay with your father and let me bring breakfast for you both. I prefer you should not be present when I have a little talk with Mr. Radway. You will not think me presumptuous if I—well, you see, your father is crippled and helpless: Radway is a younger and stronger man, and I——"

"No—no!" Winifred's eyes widened in sudden fear, and her hands fluttered

out protestingly. "Please—please—— It was nothing. The man is a boor and knew no better. There must not be more trouble here—enough has happened already—we are living on a volcano as it is. If you——"

"Then it is true?" I broke in inflexibly. "Radway tried——"

"Hush, please! I cannot listen to you. You must do nothing. I don't know what you have heard or who told you, but doubtless it was exaggerated. Anything you might do would but make matters worse—hold me up to notoriety before all this—this mixture of impossible people. Promise——"

"You must go back to your father and let me bring your breakfast to you both," I said, as firmly as I dared.

"Nothing of the sort!" the girl flashed back at me, and her chin went up with a defiant tilt. Her blue eyes searched my face coldly; something I had not seen in them before withered the soul of me—an impervious aloofness, the command of blood that an inferior know and keep his place. First I was humbled, then angered—angered because I allowed myself to be humbled. I could not grasp her change of mood. To my way of thinking, this bit of gingery femininity was taking my natural impulse of protection in a very catty spirit. I suppose the mounting blood in my cheek told the story of my hurt plainer than my clumsy speech could have done.

"I deny your right to order my conduct, Mr. Cawthorne," she continued, in a tone of chilled restraint, "and I do not care to have to remind you that I have a father who is my natural protector, if I need call on one."

I stepped aside and bowed. Winifred passed me with a slight inclination of her head—what the society people of her kind would call "the cut courteous," I suppose—and passed on to mingle with the cattle at the feeding place.

A chuckle sounded behind me. I turned and faced—Radway. He was slouching by the side of a bowlder not a dozen feet away, his head cocked over so that the favored ear lobe could be massaged, and his leathery cheeks cracked in a wide grin.

CHAPTER VIII.

Somewhere, maybe in one of my school copybooks, I've read that the bravest man is he who fights himself. If there's anything in that whiskered old adage I now salute myself as a brave man. For that second when I saw Radway leering at me with all the unholy joy in his warped soul I fought myself—and conquered with a knockout. The very bones of my knuckles yearned for the feel of his horse's chin against them; my whole body tensed itself to the battle fever. Yet, with an exterior cold as ice, I walked up to the man, arms down. He quickly straightened from his slouch at my approach and set himself.

"Radway, I'm going to beat you up for fair," I said quietly—with a quiet that surprised me. "But I'm not going to do it here. Will you give me fifteen minutes down on the beach after breakfast?"

"Huh!" he snorted, his mouth relaxing once more into a grin. "You're talking mighty big, Mister Man. If there's any beating up to be done, why not here and now?"

"For the simple reason that I don't want to have the crew see you thrashed," I replied as coolly as I could. "You're in command here, and you'd lose your grip over those dogs if they saw you licked. Will you be down on the beach, where there's solid footing, say an hour from now?"

I think the man could see easily enough there was no bluffing on my part. Nor was he in the least afraid of me; I was sure of that. Radway's

rearing had been in a rough school, and his fiber was tough as eucalyptus. But his soul was deformed and his temper perverse; he seized with avidity opportunity to dig me.

"It's sweet of you, Mister Man, not to want to lick me afore th' eyes of my crew," he drawled. "If that was your real excuse, which it isn't. Truth is you don't want to run th' risk o' bein' made a sight of before th' eyes of yon bit o' woman flesh what's just turned you flat as a Yarmouth scrowler." The fellow's mood grew bantering. He laughed.

"An' might I make so bold as to arsk why you seeks th' privilege o' bein' beat up so your own mother won't know you?"

"I'll explain that to you on the beach if you can't guess already," I snapped, feeling my grip on myself slipping under his taunts. "You'll be there?"

"Yes, an' you'll come back on a shutter," he said, and walked to the cook fire.

I followed at a distance. I did not want Winifred Bowles exposed to his presence unprotected, however she might profess to resent my playing the hero chaperon. She left the circle of table stones just as I arrived, carrying plates and coffee cups back to where rheumatism held her dad chained. She did not see me—purposely.

Breakfast finished, I lit my pipe, made a detour of the tent street to avoid the possibility of encountering Winifred, and so reached the beach. Tide was at the ebb, and, as a consequence, there was a thirty-foot strip of damp, pounded sand, hard and springy as a dancing floor, stretching the rim of water around from point to point of the crescent horns which made the cove. Twenty feet out, the breakers boomed and smoked, little water volcanoes in thunderous eruption. Great seabirds, the like of which I'd never seen, wheeled and dipped just outside the surf line, on the lookout for fish; their cries made counterpoint for the bellowing of the rollers. The scene was wild enough.

Down the beach to the south I strolled until the shoulder of the hill composing the lower barrier of the cove cut off sight of the camp. There I waited for Radway to come. Before fifteen minutes had passed I saw his figure on the beach above. He caught sight of me, turned, and walked swiftly down the pounded sand toward me. I was glad.

I kicked off my shoes, stripped off socks, coat, and shirt, so that I was unencumbered by clothes above the waist; the sand was cool to my bare feet. So I waited his coming. Radway was grinning as he came up to me, and his coat was already over his arm.

"You're looking very fit, Mister Man," he said, as his eyes traveled over my naked torso and folded arms. There was a note of admiration under the acid taunting in his voice.

"Strip if you're going to," I answered shortly.

"Very cocky, indeed—very cocky," Radway soliloquized. "This fine bird wants to do a little crowing before he gets his spurs trimmed." He removed his shoes and pulled his shirt over his head. The man in his clothes had been deceptive; now, stripped to the waist, he showed a deep, heavily muscled chest, with arms not thick, but thewed to the shoulders by wide, hard bands of fighting brawn. Despite his ten years or more seniority, Radway was no easy man to lay out. Years of the sea had made him tough as green oak; there was not an ounce of overweight on the man.

"I suppose," he drawled, as he approached me with guard up, "we're to fight fer a kiss—to see who has th' privilege o' bussin' little Miss Bowles."

The fellow's ruse worked admirably. Blind with rage, I rushed him to smash

his hateful words back against his teeth. He caught me with a swing just below the ear which sent me sprawling, all fours, onto the sand. I had just a flicker of judgment left, and the instant I hit the sand I rolled quickly out of his reach and was on my feet before he could pounce upon me. Sea code of fist fighting knows no Queensbury; a man once down has to take on a wild-cat antagonist.

Once the solid sand was under my feet soberness came to me. I knew that to lose my temper would be fatal; Radway had won the first blow on craft, but he would have to score others by straight fighting. The long horse face behind the guarding fists was pulled into a sidewise grin. "This young feller's goin' to be easy trimmin'," Radway whispered out of the down-drawn corner of his mouth. "But we'll have to bruise 'im up some for his sweetheart to see."

He finished with a startled "Huh!" for, by a feint, I lifted his guard and slammed my right home straight over the heart; the blow jolted him hard. He attempted to run into a clinch, but I dodged and sent a glancing blow to the head, which ripped along his pet ear. Radway snarled like a cornered wolf and rushed me again. I tried to get under his guard with an uppercut, but failed; his tremendous swing missed my chin by the fraction of an inch and one shoulder banged against my chest as his body toppled forward with the impetus. I clipped him lightly on the pet ear again as we broke away.

Each had something of the other's measure by this time; knew the other's style and capacity. In reach, Radway had me; in weight and agility, I knew myself to be his superior. His was the usual fighting style of the water-front saloon—bore in with left and right, head down. To get him I would have to be quick to side step and ready to flash in a punishing short hook or uppercut. Long-range exchange of blows was not his style. We circled warily about each other, waiting each for an opening. Deep into my lungs searched the stiff sea wind; the cries of the birds were in my ears; the thunder of the surf kept measure with the pounding of my blood. I was exultant, vividly alive, confident I could batter this man into unconsciousness. Radway still grinned, but there was something forced and set in the leer.

I tried a little rapid footwork, dancing in with a hot lead and retreating before he could counter. He was swift to cover up, and I barked my knuckles against his wrists to no purpose. "Pickin' posies in a garden?" Radway taunted, as he parried, and I dropped my right to invite him in. In he came, too, and with such a curious crab step that he fooled me completely. His fist swung against my solar plexus with a force fortunately lessened by the beginning of my backward jump. It was a vicious blow nevertheless, and I felt a sudden numbness jump through arms and legs. To save myself I clinched with him, fouling his churning hands with mine until I felt full strength flooding back in a tide. Then, just as his right began to slip under mine for a blow, I sent a short jolt up from my waist with all the power in my left arm, aided by the sudden straightening of my legs from their crouch. I saw Radway's head swing back with a terrific jerk, and his teeth clicked like the latch of a gate. Vainly his hands caught at my body as he sank to the sand. I rocked his head again with a short swing to the pet ear as it passed me.

He flopped flat, rolled over on his face, and lay quite still. I waited a few feet away, ready to batter him down again should he rise. Fascinated, I watched the bellows heave of his ribbed sides, saw the play of the back muscles under the drive of his inhalations. When he did not stir, I went

closer to turn him over and help him back to consciousness. A hand shot out, gripped my right ankle, and I was sprawling on the sand before I knew it. Radway, his eyes like a mad beast's, leaped on me in the batting of an eye, knelt on my chest, and groped for my throat under the protection of my chin, rigidly drawn down against my chest by automatic instinct of protection.

"Now say your prayers!" he screamed. Murder looked out of his eyes—cold murder.

Just as his fingers pried under my chin and closed about my throat, I got him with an old jujutsu trick I picked up once in Panama City. My right leg swung out, up, and down, and my naked heel smote the top of Radway's spine just where it entered the head a heavy straight-down blow. His head drove forward so that our foreheads cracked, and on the instant I was out from under him and on my feet.

Again he lay inert, and this time there was no fake about it. That heel blow on the spine and the crack my forehead had given his, descending, had laid him out for the time. I myself was a bit dizzy and shadow-brained from the blow on the head. I knelt on one knee, never for an instant taking my eyes off the sprawling shape near me, and so I got my breath again and let the wind clear my brain. When the cobwebs were wiped out I was conscious of only one cold, calculating resolve in my mind.

I would beat this Radway as no man ever was so beaten and survived. I would put him into unconsciousness and drag him out of it for more punishment. Because he fought foul! Because he didn't play the game as it should be played he would pay—pay like the devil!

Radway rolled over on his face and slowly got to one knee; then I put my arms under his shoulders—from behind—and helped him to his feet. That done, I went around in front of him and lifted his right hand to guard position.

"Look out, Radway," I said sharply, "something's coming!" And I stretched him flat with a straight drive to the heart.

He was several minutes in a daze. I brought my handkerchief, wet in ocean water, to fling against his face, the better to fetch him back for the rest of his punishment. This time I waited until he was well on his guard, with head cleared, before I started after him. He fought bitterly, grimly. Knowing why I had suddenly become relentless and questioning not at all the reasonableness of my retribution, he was withal no coward—made no cry for mercy.

So I thrashed him without mercy, taking heavy blows myself, but giving heavier. Thrashed him until his face was not human. Three times I flung sea water into his face and helped him to his feet. Once he knocked me sprawling. Finally he went down with a groan and lay like one dead.

I was bending over him when I heard a shot and felt a crushing blow on the head—shot and blow coming as one. I dropped.

CHAPTER IX.

How long I lay under the shadow of unconsciousness I do not know; those were minutes dropped from my life. Slowly, painfully I came back. First I felt the sweep of the wind across my naked chest, and then the hard sand took form under my fingers. My head was splitting; a grinding and pulsation ran along the sutures of my skull. At last, by infinite labor and pain, I managed to sit up. Something warm trickled down from my forehead to drop from my nose. My hand explored cautiously the top of my head and gave me news of how badly hurt I was.

A bullet had raked my scalp from forelock to crown, cutting to the bone. By the smallest fraction of an inch I had been spared death. Less than the thickness of the bullet that scored me had been my margin of escape. Swivel-eye's "little snorker" had spoken again, and a second murder on Trinidad had been accomplished in spirit, if not in fact.

As comprehension pushed through the fog over my mind I turned my head to see how Radway fared, recollection of the last full moments before the light went out having returned to me. Radway was not where I had finally dropped him; I was alone on the stretch of sun-flooded beach. The flat floor of sand swayed and heaved; I rubbed my eyes and looked again, wondering if the bullet that had nicked my skull had played tricks with my vision. No, Radway was gone; but a few yards away his shoes stood upright by the side of his jacket and cap, grotesquely waiting like faithful slaves for their master to step into them. Two curious scorings on the sand, starting from the spot where I expected to see the first officer lying and leading straight across the wet band of beach to the rocks farther back, attracted my notice. I crawled to the place where these curious marks started, and there tried to whip my bufuddled brain into reading the sand laid out for solution.

And about were the marks of our fight—a dab of wet sand kicked up here; the sharp depression of a hard-driven heel there; crisscross prints of bare feet. But down through this jumbled relief map of struggle came alien signs—the prints of shod feet, a pair of them coming and going. Down from the dry sand beyond the tide line to the dent Radway's head had made in his last heavy pitch backward; then away again led the shoe prints, and between them the scored lines, evidently made by dragging heels. A little forced deduction, hard to lick into shape what with the tumult in my head, yielded the answer. Some one—the same who had tried to kill me presumably—had come from his ambush after I dropped, bored through the head as he thought, and had dragged the still unconscious Radway away from the beach. Of the beaten man not a souvenir remained but those gaping shoes and the tumbled jacket and cap.

Was Radway dead, and these prints those of a burying party? The thought hit me a wallop, and then was discarded as but a part with the red nightmare of my return to consciousness. The one who tried to murder me would hardly possess the soft instinct for doing the decent by Radway, particularly when I lay stretched near by, undoubtedly counted by the assassin as done for. No, some unaccountable desire to serve Radway, to take him away from the scene of a supposed murder and revive him, had moved the man behind the automatic. The precious Swivel Eye—for who else could have done this trick?—had avenged himself on me and found mercy in his heart for the first officer in the same moment. Yet in Swivel Eye this contradiction of impulses was beyond comprehension.

Alone on the beach between surf and rock, I nursed myself back to strength. After I had managed to get to the water line, where the thin little waves lapped, and had bathed my wounded head with stinging salt wâter, I lay flat and let the stiff winds and hot sunshine search me through. A soothing lassitude crept over me, binding my limbs with bonds of weakness. To escape the incoming tide I made shift to crawl to where my coat and shoes lay near the base of the cliff, and there, head pillowed, I fell into a sleep heavy as the spell of opium.

The cold touch of water whipped me back to consciousness. I sat up with a start just as the pioneer wave of the

advancing tide ran back for reënforcements. I saw that the beach was nigh covered, and soon the place where I lay at the cliff's foot would be claimed. I staggered to my feet, still very light-headed, and, with my coat over my arm and shoes rescued from the wet, I made haste to skirt the tide line around the foot of the cliff and to gain safe ground where the camp's slope dipped to meet the beach. Plain enough, now, why Swivel Eye had let me lie where I dropped. He had counted on the tide for my undertaker—counted that soon my body would be carried out to the grave that has no headstone.

The sun was dropping down to the sea edge; I had been out of the world the better part of the day. But sleep had been a blessing. Clear was my head, and my body had its strength again. What was my next move? There's where I was stuck. Go back to camp barehanded against Swivel-eye's hate and the certain ticket to Never-never land he carried in his right hand? What else to do? Where else to go unless I skirt the camp, climb my fire escape to the mystery land of the plateau, and boldly seek to penetrate to the abode of that machine thing whose voice I had heard amid the crags the day before. No, I was not ready to do that, for I would not leave Winifred Bowles to the chances of the camp, hurt as I was by the flash of her resentment of the morning. Suddenly a plan came to me. Why not make my supposed death an asset, play it for a surprise return match with Swivel Eye, catch that precious citizen off his guard, and take his "little snorker" by a swift onslaught when he should be staggered by my resurrection. Even as he had stalked me, followed Radway and myself to the beach, and, waiting his chance, taken a pot shot at me from the brink of the cliff, so would I hunt this skulking little rat in the dark—play his own game.

When the cook fires began to show ruddy against the background of the island's core and silhouetted figures strode back and forth against the flames, I began cautiously to pick my way through the scrub and rubble toward the camp. I had in mind only a general plan of action—to catch Swivel Eye alone, if possible, and away from his crowd of roughnecks; then disarm him. My desire was to reach one of the tents nearest to the passengers' cook fire, counting on its occupants being among the crowd at the eating place; from there I could keep an eye on my game. To avoid encountering any of the passengers, I made a detour of the tent street, which stretched between the cook fires and myself, and at last resorted to crawling in order to gain my objective. Fifty yards away were the fires, with their circle of bowlders serving as seats and tables for the diners; the tent I aimed for stood half that distance, its front pointing fireward.

I had nearly made the tent when I saw Winifred Bowles coming up the deserted tent lane toward the fire. She had empty dishes in her hands and was evidently returning them to the stewards after the meal with her afflicted dad in their tent. A plan darted into my head. I risked detection by the group at the fires, rose to my feet, and darted to the cover of the tent, keeping it between the fires and myself.

"Miss Bowles!"

She started at my sharp, whispered hail and smothered a scream.

"It is I—Cawthorne—here by the tent. Here, out of the firelight, quick!"

At my name the girl came running to the shadow by the tent wall. She set the dishes on the ground and instantly gave both her hands to mine, with an eager, impulsive yielding of herself that intoxicated me for the moment. In the dark, I could see the wide whites of

her eyes. Her breath, panting in surprise, was light on my face.

"Oh!" she whispered, and again, "Oh!" Nothing else. One hand detached itself from mine and strayed to my forehead, touching the handkerchief I had bandaged my head with. I thought I heard a stifled sob.

"Listen, Miss Bowles!" I whispered rapidly. "You must help me. I want to get hands on that little bald-headed steward—the one called Swivel Eye. The safety of the camp—your safety—depends on my doing it at once and quietly. You must go to the cook fires, tell him your father needs him in his tent—any excuse, and the promise of a tip. Bring him down this way past this tent. Now go, please!"

"But—but," she began breathlessly. "You—what has happened to you? Radway—what did he do to you and where is he?"

"Where is Radway?" I echoed. "Why——"

"Gone!" Winifred hurried on. "The whole camp believes that he killed you or you did away with him. Now you come back alone—and wounded. Oh, please—please tell me what it all means. Don't remember this morning. I was mean—and snippy because you made me be. I wanted to keep you away from that man—didn't want you to fight him. Oh, can't you understand!" Her voice broke, and she drew away from me to hide her face. A great wave of tenderness swept over me and tightened my throat. So she had been afraid—for me! And she had tried to be cruel to save me from an encounter with Radway!

"Little lady," I whispered, my voice shaking with exultation, "I'll tell you everything when I've finished with Swivel Eye. Please go now; not a minute to waste."

She returned my heartening grip on her hands and skipped out from the tent's shadow. Peeking around the corner of the canvas wall, I saw her trim little figure striding, with its inimitable free shoulder swing, toward the fires. It mingled with others and was lost. A minute, two minutes, passed, then I saw her pushing through the circle of black figures and coming down toward the beginning of the tent street, where I waited. Behind her trailed the pussy-footed Swivel Eye. On they came, she betraying nothing by so much as a turn of her head. I tensed myself for a spring. She stepped past me, and then I leaped.

Swivel-eye's yell was choked off by my smothering hand clapped over his mouth. My left arm, crooked around his throat, shut off his breath. A quick butt of the kness to the small of his back doubled him up like a carpenter's rule, and I had him off the tent street and back in the shadow of the tent wall in an instant. I throttled the little devil brutally, for he had sunk his teeth into one of my fingers. As he weakened I cast a fearful glance around the tent corner; no indication that Swivel-eye's yell had attracted notice.

He collapsed. Winifred, by my side now, hands fluttering like birds, jumped to anticipate my needs and began fumbling the loose end of a tent rope. I dropped the weight in my arms, and, kneeling, swiftly passed my hands over coat pockets and trousers belt.

No revolver! Not even a cartridge!

Winifred heard my groan of disappointment and whispered an eager question.

"The little whelp's hidden it—the revolver," I answered dolefully. "He's the one that's had it, you know. Took a shot at me down at the beach this morning and nearly got me. Thought I'd find the gun on him. But now——"

Here, indeed, I had jumped against a problem. I had Swivel Eye, but not the weapon that made him dangerous. Under my knee was the man who, I was morally certain, had tried to mur-

der me ten hours before; but what could I do with him? Radway mysteriously gone—and in a manner Swivel Eye himself knew best—there was none in authority to whom I could turn the cockney over. I could not act as judge and executioner and kill him out of hand, though I knew him to be dangerous as a hound with the rabies. To let him go, with the revolver still unsecured, would be but to invite sudden death for myself and for Winifred, now down on the man's black book for luring him hither. I felt the body under me stir.

"Something to stop his mouth!" I hurriedly whispered. Winifred turned her back to me; I heard a sharp tear, and she was by my side, a length of lace-edged white in her hand. She helped me to wad the dainty fragment into his mouth, binding the gag tight by bandages brought under the ears and tied back of the neck. Then I cut pieces from the tent rope and trussed Swivel-eye's hands securely behind his back. Extra line I stuffed in my pockets for emergencies. A gurgling and choking behind the gag told of the prisoner's returning consciousness. Necessity bred a temporary plan.

"I'll have to call on you again, Miss Bowles," I said, in a guarded voice, so that the bound man could not hear. "Please find Strindberg, the Swede; Baker, that lively little English chap; Ford, the wireless lad, and your father—no, you say he is laid up in his tent; we do not need him quite yet. But tell the others to go down to the beach and turn to the south where the cliff is. I will be there waiting with this hombre. Tell them the time has come for action, and that I need their help; they'll understand."

"Are things—serious?" the girl asked, in a voice of forced calmness.

"It's to prevent their becoming so that we must act. This disappearance of Radway; the little fellow here trying to kill me—something's framing up that's beyond me."

"You will not keep anything from me?" She drew close with a free movement of comradeship. "You will let me help if danger comes?"

She found my answer in the hearty squeeze I gave her hands, and then she was off. I turned to Swivel Eye. My hand in the slack of his collar jerked him to his feet.

"Now, Hoskins," I gritted, the very touch of his skin against my knuckles loathsome to me, "you're going to take a little walk with me, and I'll crack your windpipe with just a half turn of the wrist if you don't walk pronto. Off we go now!"

The little steward needed no further convincing; with my knuckles firmly against the back of his neck, he started at a run. We gained the heavier gloom beyond the glare of the fires undetected. I directed my captive down the same path from the beach I had recently traversed; once on the sand, we skirted the edge of the outgoing tide until we came to the cliff foot, near which Swivel Eye's bullet had dropped me. I sat my prisoner down on a rock and proceeded to tie his feet. Protesting snuffles came from behind the gag. His feet secured, I took the wadded fragment of Winifred's skirt from his mouth, knowing that the boom of the surf would drown any outcry he might make.

"Now, Hoskins, a little talk fest," I began. "I'll ask the questions, and you'll answer—just like Sunday school. First question: Where's that gun?"

The snarl of a trapped hyena was his only reply.

"Come again, Hoskins," I urged gently; "where's that gun you tried to kill me with this afternoon?"

"Oo syes I 'ad a gun or myde a shy at a-killin' of yuh?" he muttered. "Just your sye-so don't myke it so. An' wot's more, yuh'll tyke orff these 'ere bloody

ropes an' stop this 'igh-'anded business or it'll go th' worse with yuh."

I waited for further speech, which was not forthcoming, my mind meanwhile turning over a hasty plan to force a confession from the tricky little murderer. Very deliberately I unlaced one of his heavy shoes, and, with it, removed the sock. I could feel the fellow's curious eyes on me, though his face was hidden by the shadow. Deliberately I laid the groundwork for the swift assault of fear which I knew would loosen his tongue. Out came my cigar lighter, a little pocket-torch affair whose wick fortunately had escaped wetting when we were rolled in the surf at the landing. The lid flew back with a snap, and a tiny bluish flame flickered at the wick's end. I gravely contemplated the dancing fire, tested it with my finger. Then, shielding it against the wind with one hand, I lowered the burning wick until it licked against the bare sole of Swivel-eye's foot. Just for an instant I held it there. Swivel Eye shrieked in terror.

"The surf's very noisy, little guy," I taunted. "You'll have to yell louder than that to be heard in camp." Then I sat on his legs to hold them down and began to lower the flame to the bare foot once more.

"F'r th' love o' Heaven, Mister Cawthorne, sir! Don't chivvy me that wye! I'll tell! I'll tell!"

"Where's the gun, then?" I repeated.

"Hit's 'id, sir, in a syfe plyce be'ind a rock back o' camp. Hi'll show yuh, only yuh won't chivvy me cruel, sir!"

"You put it away after taking a pot shot at me this morning, eh?"

"S'elp me, Mister Cawthorne, I takes no shots at anybody." Swivel Eye lied. I snapped open the cover of the cigar lighter again without a word. He writhed under me in abasement of fear.

"Lor' love me, sir; don't! Mybye Hi did 'ave one at yuh just in fair gyme. Yuh give me th' kicks in th' pants, an' I was fair bitter abawt it. But——"

"You killed that Argentino yesterday after you found a gun in his tent," I challenged, eager to get all the truth as long as I had my man in the mood to give up.

"Yuh wanta myke a bleedin' murderer o' me, Mister Cawthorne, sir?" Swivel Eye whined. "Hi'll admit as 'ow th' silly juggins went an' ran into a bullet w'en 'e 'ad no cause to be that carelesslike. Now, sir, tyke off these ropes an' we'll 'ave no more 'ard feelin's."

"Easy, Hoskins," I answered. "Lots more to talk about yet. What did you do with Radway after you dragged him off the beach this morning?"

"W'y get uneasy abawt 'im?" Swivel Eye parried. "Hi seen 'im do 'is best t' choke th' life outa yuh w'en 'e wuz fightin' yuh foul this mornin'."

"That's no answer," I came back at him. "Out with it; where's Radway?"

"If Hi mykes no mistyke 'e's much th' same as me just now," came the answer, with a sly chuckle, instantly suppressed, "all bound round an' uncomf'ablelike."

I was just about to press another question home when I heard my name called. Turning, I could see three figures vaguely outlined against the phosphorescent pillows of the surf; they were approaching. I hurried down to meet them. Strindberg, Baker, and Ford, hastily summoned by Winifred's message, had come at my call for aid. A heartening handgrip all around and then I told them briefly of my capture of Swivel Eye, the events of the morning that had preceded it, and what I had drawn from the steward concerning the revolver and the mystery of Radway's disappearance. Ford took me up when I had finished the partial revelation of Radway's whereabouts:

"I fear, sir, trouble's brewin' with the crew to-night; from little bits I've

heard here and there it looks as if they've set on to-night for a big devilment. Wot with Radway outa the way and they thinkin' you dead—you bein' counted sorta leader among the passengers, Mister Cawthorne—why, it looks to me they count themselves free to run the camp."

"But they are not likely to start anything without Swivel Eye, their leader," I objected, "and we've got him."

"Don't be too sure o' that, Mister Cawthorne," Ford retorted gloomily. "Swivel Eye may be their leader, but he's worked them up to th' boilin' point, an' they can break loose without him. All the more likely if they can't find Swivel Eye and suspect a trick."

"What can we do if trouble comes?" Strindberg's quaintly accented speech came in interruption. "We are four—five counting Bowles, who is from rheumatism incapable; they are sixty of the crew, and in the steerage fifty more."

I told them then of the mystery of the plateau, my discovery of the machine bolt, the hidden engine, and the searchlight signals at night. They listened to me in stupefied amazement. I had to put the bolt in Baker's hand to convince him of the truth of my story. He murmured, "Extraordinary!" over and over again. In our grubbing over possible explanations, we almost forgot the near presence of the trussed Swivel Eye and pressing exigencies. I recalled my companions to the necessity of the moment.

"It's up to us to force Swivel Eye to take us to where he's hidden Radway," I said. "If trouble's likely to start, the sooner we get Radway back on the job the better. Then we can bluff Swivel Eye into giving up the gun."

The others agreed, and we stepped over to the shadow of the cliff's foot to put the little steward on his feet and drive him to Radway's place of concealment.

He was gone!

The ropes lay there; the one shoe I had slipped off his foot lay where I had dropped it. But of the slippery little eel I had thought so securely bound not hide nor hair. Though he had not been alone ten minutes, and we four had stood not fifty feet from him, the cockney had wriggled out of the knots and fled. I was staggered.

"This means—this means——" Baker stammered.

"Big trouble!" I shouted. "Quick! Back to the camp while there's time! There's a girl there—and her father ——"

We began to run, all four of us pounding over the hard sand. We had not gone a hundred yards when from the camp came a chorus of yells—a woman's shriek. A sudden flare of fire shot up into the dark; it was a burning tent.

CHAPTER X.

The events of the ensuing few minutes remain with me a disjointed memory—like a shopworn "movie" film that flickers and skips bits of the action. I recall that, as we plunged through the scrub in the direction of the fire-reddened cluster of tents, a confused jumble of yells and cries sounded in our ears; we saw prancing figures rush back and forth against the firelight, run in and out of tents. The hounds of the crew and the steerage had gone mad with the lust for robbing and deviltry, and the terror-stricken passengers were fleeing before them like sheep. Another isolated picture: out of the shadows hard by the tent nearest the beach stepped the figure of a girl, sharply outlined against the red light of riot. Her hair was flying over her shoulders; her hands stretched out toward us as we came charging up with appeal mutely dra-

matic. Winifred it was, and behind her, laboring under the handicap of his affliction, the blocky shape of old Pops.

We closed around them. A little bag she carried I took from her hand. Baker and Ford, one on either side, gave their shoulders to the invalid for a hand rest.

"We've got to take a chance on the plateau," I warned. "Nothing but robbery and worse in the camp to-night, and for some of us, if Swivel Eye should see us, a bullet, no doubt."

"Food?" queried Strindberg.

"Again, we take a chance," I answered. "Whoever they are running that mystery machine up there, they cannot be worse than the crew here to-night. Unless they've got the hearts of murderers they'll take us in when they know the situation here. Come on; it's the only chance we have, even though a risky one!"

This was hardly the time for carefully weighing the pros and cons of things. I had none too much faith in my own proposal as it was; but accepted it on inspiration as the first and only hope of present security. Time enough to face whatever new problem might lie at the end of our hazardous trip over the plateau. The others accepted my leadership and suggestion without question. Little Ford showed the stuff that was in him by sticking with us when, had he stayed and faced the mutineers, nothing more than possible rough handling would have come to him. The appeal in Winifred's frightened eyes went straight to the core of the lad's manhood, and my low-spoken "Good boy!" told him that his standing to the test had not passed unnoticed.

Where we had encountered Winifred and her father we were safe for the minute from detection; it was at the end of the tent street nearest the beach, and the crowd of plunderers was busy looting the tents adjacent to the cook fires. But there was not an instant to lose. Swivel-eye's hell hounds were between ourselves and the trail through the tree ferns to the foot of the rocky fire escape up which we must pass; in order to avoid being caught, it was necessary to make a wide detour by way of either of the cliff walls that came down to bound the cove with their horns of rock. Once I could make the half circuit of the camp and strike the stream leading up to the falls, escape from the mutineers would be assured. I led the way back to the beach, there turned to the north and followed the sand until we came to the small marsh marking the mouth of the stream. Our progress was slow, for we had nothing but the steely starlight to guide us, and the scrub and rubble made rough going. Besides, poor old Pops Bowles, though he made not a murmur, was having to rally every ounce of his grit to keep up.

The uproar at the camp grew fainter behind us, though a brighter glow indicated that more tents were going—fired in pure deviltry. What was transpiring back there where anarchy stalked and the spirit of brute violence ran unhindered was something to send shudders through us. Once we heard a revolver shot. Swivel Eye was back with his herd and had retrieved his "little snorker" from its hiding place.

Winifred walked with me, my hand under her arm supporting her. Strindberg, Baker, and Ford spelled each other in helping Pops over the ground. For a time the girl by my side was silent; the swift outbreak of brutishness behind her had left her stunned, so far from her experience and knowledge of life was this ugly reality. To take her mind from the spell of violence I recounted my adventures of the previous day on the plateau, told her of the finding of the impossible machine bolt and my discovery of the mysterious motor in the rocks. At her urging, I narrated

the details of my fight with Radway on the beach, glossing over as best I could the raw facts of mauling and pounding, and unconsciously filling in the picture with bits of my own sensation of exultation in sheer muscle power. I felt her hand tighten on my arm as I told her of Radway's trick and how he throttled me.

"I will not forget," she said, in a voice almost a whisper. "And yet you are the man who said you 'didn't know the trails in my country'—who was mortified because you thought you couldn't talk small talk under a conservatory palm like the dancing men of what people at home call 'our set.' Oh, if you knew——"

I waited for the end of that sentence; it never came. Winifred lapsed again into silence, and I, groping to read her thoughts, but fearing to blunder if I sank a conversational prospect shaft into them, held my tongue. Indeed, I had much to think about; I, who was responsible for this dubious venture in the dark. For myself, for the other men, not a thought; we were well able to take a back-slap from fortune whenever it came. But for this little bit of silk, this girl of the avenue, reared to the softness of life—what a prospect! I groaned inwardly when full realization of how blindly we groped for escape struck in on me. We were playing a lottery where the capital prize was one ticket in ten thousand, and there were no consolations. Still, we had slipped out of the grasp of Swivel Eye and his pack—for the minute, at least—and for that fact God be thanked.

My business of trail finder occupied me more and more as the stream we followed up from the sea entered the forest of tree ferns near the glen where I knew the ascent to the plateau to be. It was so dark that to keep together we had to link hands. The hairy stems of the tree ferns obstructed our progress, slapped at our faces like monkey's arms. Underfoot bowlders lay ready to stub our toes and throw us. The maze of swaying fronds around us was ghostly; a whispering and rustling as of people at a funeral made the glen a convention hall of spirits.

Pops Bowles, who had borne up under a heavy toll of pain so far, gave out completely as we came to the foot of the cliff within sound of the plashing water from the falls. "I'm done," he sighed, as he sank to a rock. "Go ahead, and I'll catch up when the light comes."

Winifred was by his side in an instant, soothing him and crooning mother talk in his ear. The rest of us withdrew a little and talked the situation over. It was my opinion that we could not attempt the climb to the plateau in the dark; too risky, especially with the girl and the crippled father to be helped over the bad places. Moreover, we were now a mile from camp, and in a place unknown to any of the crew to the best of my belief. There was small chance of our being followed in the dark, especially when Swivel-eye's dogs had plenty to keep them occupied at camp. The others concurred with me, and we prepared to spend the rest of the night in the ghostly jungle of the tree ferns. Winifred gave my hand a little pat of gratitude when I helped her to make a pillow of dried fern fronds for her father's head. Pops, utterly spent, stretched himself out, and, with his hand laid like a child's in one of Winifred's, he dropped asleep. I left the girl sitting there by her father's side, and, with the other three refugees, withdrew a decent distance. The night was warm and dry; the plash-plash of the falls was like a lullaby. Somehow all the stress and anxiety of the past hours dropped from us, and we four men, by our talk of simple things, bits of reminiscences, and scraps of experience in strange lands, came to know each other. Each unconsciously

revealed himself to the others; that and the bond of common danger we had faced and still were facing drew us together as pals—pals of old acquaintance.

The talk pattered around the circle, then insensibly diminished. Ford caught himself in a snore, snickered, and frankly went to sleep. Baker followed suit, and Strindberg and I talked on alone for another hour. Finally he politely excused himself, dropped to his side, and joined the others over the sleep divide. I, wide awake, and, alone once more, troubled afresh with doubts of the next day's adventure, sat and smoked. Perhaps I had been sitting this way for a half hour when I heard a twig snap behind me, turned, and saw Winifred tiptoeing toward me.

"I am lonesome," she said simply, and sat down beside me.

"You should be asleep; hard day coming to-morrow," I reproved.

"Why not you, too?" she asked.

"Somebody must keep a watch," I answered defensively. "This is war time, you know."

"Then there'll be two sentinels," the girl laughed. "Each will keep the other awake." I accepted her order with a spreading of the hands in mock humility.

"Madam van Studiford Grundy back in the old town would call this highly unconventional—and not at all proper," the girl rippled, with a backward toss of her hands. "I think she'd have me up before the board of social censors for this."

"I've never met the lady; she don't live in the rough country," I answered. "Tell me something about her."

Winifred accepted the hint underlying my words and began to talk of the life she knew at home—the life of the town and country place wherein men and women move in cultured ease, making the pursuit of pleasure under genteel rules of deportment their sole passion. She opened to me an entire new world—the world whose outposts only I had glimpsed in the black headlines of Sunday-newspaper supplements.

"New York is much farther away than your Llanos," she said finally, her voice vibrant with some modulation of feeling I could not divine. "Tell me about them—about what you do when you make rivers behave and deserts bloom. That's real; what I know and live is only the make-believe."

I did as she bid, but a strange sort of perversity led me to dwell on the roughest and most ugly features of the engineer's job. I suppose it was a Don Quixote idea of setting myself down in her eyes so that were I ever tempted to seek what I had no right to have she would have all the more reason to deny. I told her of brutal man fights in the mines of Chilpincingo; of standing off native strikers with sawed-off shotguns over in Candelaria; how a party of us freebooters tricked the governor of Catamarca State into calling off the troops he had sent to arrest us for jumping government lands. When I got through Henry C. Cawthorne had a reputation any Sing Sing lifetermer would be proud to own. Dawn was beginning to pipe-clay the sky before my chronicles of a bad engineer were complete. I could see the face of the girl beside me; it was that of a child hearing stories.

All at once she did a strange thing, She sent both hands fluttering out, found mine, and let hers rest there. Her little face, chin uptilted, was very close below mine.

"Henry Cawthorne," she said, very low, "I am glad I am under your care just now, because—because you are a man."

For a minute—oh, a long, tempting minute—I looked down into her eyes; in the half light, they were dusky and deep and adorable. Then—I rose

quickly, led her back to where her father was sleeping, and awakened all the sleepers.

Breakfastless we were, and with nothing to refresh us but the clean water of the falls. But the night and its terrors were behind us, and we were all ready to play the hand a new day might deal. The sun was not yet up when we came to the foot of the rock ladder and started its ascent. It was bitter work. What with brave old Pops defying his rheumatism to floor him at every step, each of us taking turns pushing him from below and tugging at his arms from above, slipping, catching at handy spurs of rock and tufts of grass, we managed to reach the top without accident. The sun bobbed up over the eastern rim of the island just then, and, as the shadows were swept from the cove below us, we looked down on the camp site. Not a sign of movement there; just the small white cones of the tents and two black spots from which threads of smoke arose, the sites of the burned tents. At our distance everything seemed peaceful, and our excursion into this wilderness of the plateau appeared rank madness. But each of us knew that the peace of the camp was but exhaustion and anarchy slept there.

Our tramp across the arid plain to the camel-backed butte which was the landmark of the secret engine was wearisome. Winifred, a little faint from want of sleep and food, nevertheless plodded steadily at the elbow of her father, cheering him on with a rattling fire of raillery and small talk. Before the sun was half high we had come to the butte, and the drone of the hidden motor was in our ears. Excitement gripped all of us. We knew we had come to the edge of adventure, and none dared guess what would be the outcome.

In a little cavern of rock, we held a council of war. That Winifred and her father should remain there while the rest of us went to spy out the land was agreed upon as the wisest course. From their place of vantage above the plain, they could look back over our trail and easily spot at a distance any possible pursuers from the camp in ample time to permit of their following us down through the seaward gorge. As for Strindberg, Baker, Ford, and myself, we decided to push carefully down the cleft until we came upon the hidden habitation of this devil engine and its human grooms; our next step would have to be determined by what we saw.

"Remember," Pops Bowles called after us as we started to round the butte to the gate of rock beyond, "I can write a check in four or five figures to pay anybody for our keep—if they'll produce the check book."

So we left them, Winifred bravely waving good luck. We cut down from the hillside to the mouth of the black gorge, through which a crystal strip of ocean showed topaz blue. As we rounded a shoulder of rock and were permitted an uninterrupted view of the nearer, ocean-bound cliffs, Ford suddenly gripped my shoulder with a "Lawk! Look at that!"

All of us followed his pointing finger. There, high on a sharp spire of granite rising sheer out of the sea, stood a tapering mast, fully a hundred feet aloft, and from its tip stretched gauzy filaments of wire straight across a sea chasm to a similar mast set in a cleft of the main cliff.

"Wireless!" we whispered, in unison.

Wireless on this outlaw rock in the South Atlantic—the dynamo hum we heard that of the power-producing engine—why, the thing seemed incredible. Yet there were the masts and the hammock of wires strung between, businesslike and convincing. We could almost hear the hidden messages singing through the nest of copper strands.

"The war!" It was Strindberg's voice, strained with excitement. "This is the secret German relay station of which rumor made even before the war." We turned questioning glances on him.

"Yes, in Europe, even in Argentina, it has been whispered that when *the* war came, Germany, knowing the cables would be cut for her, would be prepared to direct her far-away ships through the air. Now you see——"

Admiration for an achievement in his naval craft shone in the Swede's eyes. Eagerly he ran on:

"From Nauen, in Germany, they can project the waves this far. Here distribution—to the Caribbean, down the coast to Magellan, over South America to the Chile side. There, probably, they have another station to relay to German Samoa, to German New Guinea, and so to belt the world around with the voice in the air. Wonderful!"

"But," Baker put in anxiously, "If we go down there they'll shoot us as spies—Ford here and me, at all accounts; we're Englishmen."

"We can only risk it," Strindberg returned. "I speak German; I can explain. Come!"

Down we went through the gorge, a little less steep and precarious than the one we had ascended from the camp cove. We made as little noise as possible. The humming of the dynamos grew louder. Suddenly I, who was in the lead, stopped so abruptly I almost lost my footing. Fifty feet below me, on a natural shelf in the side of the cliff, were two squat stone buildings. One was built directly against the sheer wall of the cliff, and from its roof a tall stack arose, blending so closely with the rock behind it as to be almost indistinguishable, especially from the sea side. That was evidently the power house. The second gray-stone structure squatted beneath the sagging overhead wireless hammock; from hammock to house dropped ropes of wires, plainly designating this as the radio station. Beyond and below lay a narrow crescent beach similar to the one in front of the *Castle Drummoch* camp.

As we watched, the door of the power house opened, and two men in jumpers walked across the short span to enter the wireless station. Other signs of life lacked. We held a whispered council. The Swede immediately put forward his war strategy:

"We will get as near as possible without being seen," he said. "They expect nobody, not even enemies, to come except from the seaward side. Peacefully, of course, we approach—how else without arms? As soon as we meet one I call 'Friends' in German. They will not shoot then. Even Englishmen in distress they will receive amicably. Now, Cawthorne, you and Baker to the station; Ford goes with me to the power house. Forward!"

I confess I had chills in my marrow, as, step by step, we let ourselves down the remaining rock ledges in the gorge to the shelf where the unknown dispensers of hoped-for protection were. Germans on war duty, I heard my wisdom prompting me, were more than likely to shoot first and ask questions later. Baker, who was at my elbow, had a queer pucker of nerve strain between his brows. We separated from Strindberg and Ford at the foot of the decline, they taking the shorter course to the power house. There were no windows in either power house or radio station fronting the direction of our approach. As we drew near the door of the station I saw a carbine propped against the doorpost.

The door was slightly ajar; a sound of voices came from within the house. Baker and I paused before the door an instant. I grinned at him in an ill-timed flash of humor, and pushed open the door.

Five men seated about a meal at a

center table looked up, positively hypnotized. One, I remember, had a glass of wine to his lips, and he choked, while a red stream cascaded down his chin.

"*Freund!*" I shouted. "*Ein freund!*" And I knew that hardly made sense. Baker, by my side, shouted "*Freund!*" too, with a rich, north-of-England accent.

The man at the head of the table, a big chap with a red mat of beard hanging down over his chest, ripped out a fine Teutonic cussword, reached to a chest of drawers behind him, whipped out a revolver, and snapped it five times in my face. I fell, rather than stepped, out of the door, seized the carbine there, jerked a shell into the chamber, and jumped back into the room. The rifle was at my shoulder, and I slowly swung the wicked steel snout along the row of five heads.

"Now start something!" I shouted, or words equally as senseless. The hands of every one of the five jumped toward the ceiling, and the revolver which refused to kill me—because it wasn't loaded, I afterward discovered—plumped into a dish of boiled potatoes. Such stupefied faces as those I sighted over the tip of the little steel barb at the carbine's end I have never seen. Like the painted phizes of wooden soldiers in a toy shop.

"Go through them, Baker," I commanded, "and shake them down for any more guns which might have real bullets in them. These chaps don't know the first thing about hospitality."

Little Baker, grinning like a chessy cat, went down the line, patting the thick sides of the Germans. He picked the gun out of the mess of potatoes, the only one in evidence. All hands still up.

Footsteps behind me, and Strindberg's startled face peered around my raised elbow.

"Eh—what's this, Cawthorne!" he exploded.

"I'm capturing the wireless station," I answered along the carbine butt.

"My soul, you are! You've got them all!" he cried.

CHAPTER XI.

There used to be an old song—was it in "Wang"?—about a man who had an elephant on his hands. I can salute the luckless individual with a brother feeling; I know how it feels. During the long minute I was looking down the carbine barrel at the frozen German faces about the table the thought kept pounding through my brain: "Now you've got them, what are you going to do with them?" I hadn't the remotest idea. The situation was hardly of my seeking; it just came, that's all.

Strindberg, very grave, advised me to lower the carbine while he parleyed with my captives. I did so, being careful, nevertheless, to keep the weapon at easy balance for rapid work. Strindberg began a lengthy oration in German; though I could not understand a word of it, I could judge by the tone it was conciliatory. When he had finished, the fellow with the red beard, who seemed to be commander of the little wireless garrison, answered hotly and at length. I caught the word "Verboten" several times repeated, and judged the speaker was in no pleasant frame of mind. Strindberg appeared worried.

"I told them the circumstances of our coming here," he translated; "how it was a matter of life and death with us and with the young miss we had under our protection. The lieutenant replies that our coming here is an act of war—says that when we were landed on Trinidad, the commander of the *Karlsruhe* warned these people by wireless of our presence, and ordered them to arrest us as prisoners if we tried to

interfere with the wireless station. They did not expect to be discovered, but now that we're here, the lieutenant says we're his prisoners."

"It hardly strikes me in that light," I laughed. "Tell him to guess again."

"Do not joke, Cawthorne," Strindberg caught me up. "You do not realize what you have done. This wireless station is more important to the German general staff than a first-class dreadnaught. We who are neutrals and noncombatants have raided, and, technically, captured one of Germany's most valuable points of communications. We could all be shot, of course."

Out of the tail of my eye I saw one of the Germans who was nearest us begin to sidle cautiously our way, as if preparing to leap on me and snatch the carbine. I promptly gave neutrality another wallop then. Up went the gun to my shoulder, and the chap quickly jumped back to his place, his hands in the air.

"I'm not worrying about what might be; what *is* interests us most right now," I answered Strindberg. "If you can make a deal with these fellows whereby we can stay here peacefully and be fed until a steamer comes to pick us up, all right; if not, why, we'll have to stay here, anyway. Nothing in the world can force me to take Miss Bowles back to that hellhole on the other side of the island."

"Hear, hear!" Baker chimed in. Strindberg again turned to the captives and delivered a lengthy exhortation. Redbeard boomed back at him a denial with a vicious shake of his shock head.

"He says 'No,'" the Swede admitted dolefully. "He gives us five minutes to get out; otherwise we are prisoners of war. He says he will summon the *Karlsruhe* and have all of us taken aboard in irons."

"Two can play that wireless game," I exclaimed in sudden inspiration. "We have Ford here to work the key, and he can raise a British cruiser as easily as redhead, there, can tag the *Karlsruhe* —— Stay away from that door!"

I finished in a shout, for a little chap at the far end of the room had his hand on the knob of a door behind him—the door to the wireless room, no doubt. He understood me quickly enough, and faced about, scowling.

"I yield to the majority," Strindberg reluctantly admitted, "and to force of circumstances. The lieutenant's stubbornness in obeying orders seems to leave nothing else for us to do except hold these men prisoners until we can be taken away. But, as a naval man acquainted with the rules of war, I must insist we use the wireless only for our own necessities, and play no tricks on the Germans."

"Right!" agreed Baker. I nodded consent.

"But what will we do with them?" I asked. "This holdup of mine can't continue much longer; it makes me nervous."

"Behind the power house is a cave," the Swede said. "Ford and I took just a quick look inside. There is coal there in sacks, and a door fitted to the cave mouth. Until we find a better place——"

"Good! Tell them to step out of this door one at a time," I said. "Baker, you walk ahead and see that the door to the cave is open. Strindberg, please stay with me. In case of a break, I'll shoot, but they may make a rush on me, and you'll have to help. Where's Ford?"

"I told him to remain in the power house, in case anybody should come in there," Strindberg answered. "He found another carbine there."

"Baker, tell Ford to be at the door of the cave with his gun," I called, and the Englishman, already halfway across the rock to the building housing the dynamo, waved his hand in acknowledgment. Then, at the Swede's direc-

tion, the five prisoners stepped out of the door. I, with carbine at the hip, directed them to form a line. Like a prison guard convoying a string of grayjackets, I marched the scowling prisoners across the rock to the power house. Ford stood at the door, carbine in hand and mouth stretched in a grin. Directly behind the low stone building a heavy door, set in the face of the cliff as neatly as if cliff and door-frame were the work of the same builder, stood open, Baker beside it. The careful German who had hit upon this cave as a natural storehouse for coal had taken pains to set a small iron grating in the top of the door to permit of the entrance of air, and check the danger of spontaneous combustion in the heaped-up coal within the cave. Now the grating served to insure a plentiful air supply for our prisoners. When the last of them had passed into the gloom I slammed the heavy iron-sheathed barrier behind them, and slipped a hasp in place. Some explosive German comments sounded through the grating.

The door shut and secured, I turned to look into the eyes of my three companions. There I read various emotions: bewilderment, relief, doubt. As for myself, relaxation from the strain of the last electric moments, coupled with a sudden appreciation of the absurdity of our daring coup, all at once touched off my sense of humor, and, dropping my carbine, I threw my arms about the shoulders of all three and whooped. In an instant they were with me. Joining hands, we did a war dance —four idiots gone completely daffy.

We stopped our madness, each a little shamefaced at the outburst of boyishness. After all, so far from being out of the woods, we had but swapped one set of difficulties for another; instead of dodging mutineers, we were now playing a pretty dangerous game of piracy, and in place of Swivel Eye and his pack to fear, there was a mailed fist somewhere over beyond that far, blue horizon line. When would we see it lift above the waves to smash us? Or could we send a cry for help through the air which would bring a friendly ship to take us off this cursed island before the *Karlsruhe* came scurrying up to punish us?

Before going back to bring Winifred and her father from their hiding place to our new refuge, I went into the power house to look the engine over. Plainly as long as the Germans remained stubborn, one of us would have to play groom to this smooth-purring beast of whirling steel and glinting brasswork. I was elected, for none of the others, save Strindberg, knew the difference between a flywheel and a box of biscuits, and the Swede admitted his knowledge was mainly theoretical; I had run a broken-down hoisting engine once, and was willing to take a chance at this one. A very pretty little bit of engine craft it was, compact, powerful, and well bedded on solid rock. I judged from a reading of the rheostat that the motor which the engine drove was capable of stepping up a very heavy current; that meant the wireless plant was a powerful one, with a wide range. Evidently the German wireless men kept the current low, forcing it high only on occasion of distant sending. A peek into the boiler room assured me of one thing: we wouldn't have to bother the Germans to move off the coal sacks in their prison for some time, the walls of the small boiler room being piled high with stuffed sacks.

With a reassuring test of the water cocks and a look at the fires, I was off up the gorge to bring the last two members of the raiding party down to the station. I found them anxiously awaiting word from our scouting expedition. When I told them of the unexpected turn of events on the cliff shelf and our

capture and imprisonment of the five Germans, their astonishment almost robbed them of speech.

"You're a harebrained young fellow, going around holding up the kaiser's navy with its own gun," Pops chuckled. "Some day I'll have to get my congressman busy with the secretary of state to keep you from being shot at sunrise for stealing the Iron Cross off the crown prince's coat."

"That's just a way he has with him, Pops, dear," Winifred put in, with a happy little laugh. "Mr. Cawthorne is a very direct person. Now he has provided me something to do. I will constitute myself a Red Cross unit, and give first aid to the prisoners in the coal hole—knit socks for them, if they have any knitting needles knocking around."

The girl had regained all her radiant spirits, downed by the black doings back in the camp. As I helped her and Pops to make the steep descent down the gorge she was bubbling laughter and all excitement over the new adventure which our capture of the wireless station had suddenly thrust upon us. She would be matron of prisoners, she insisted, and would gently lead their thoughts into ways of peace by sitting outside the door to the cave and singing Billy Sunday hymns to them.

So we came to the station, and, with cheers from all of us, Winifred rolled back the sleeves of her gown—sadly frayed they were by our stumbling journey through the bush the night before—and prepared to cook our belated breakfast on the tiny galley stove we found under a hutch at one side of the wireless house. Seated about the table where the lawful tenants of the station had so recently been dining, we broke our fast—for me a fast of more than twenty-four hours. Ford, who had been making an examination of the wireless room adjoining, gave us assurance that we had "a top-high instrument, which'd fetch Key West if the static was favorable."

Then, breakfast over, we seriously discussed what next to do. Strindberg, the soul of honor, especially in the matter of things military, was still grieved that we had been forced to take possession of the wireless plant; who could say, he urged, but that even now a message from Nauen or one of the far-flung units of the kaiser's fleet in Atlantic waters might be ticking fruitlessly into the cold receivers in the next room. He was for releasing the wireless operator, or one of the two operators, if there were more than one in the coal hole, and letting him attend to his duties under a pledge not to reveal what had happened to the station guard. "Our friend Ford, here, can hear everything the man sends, and prevent his betraying us," the naval attaché argued.

"A proper lot I c'n listen in on," the wireless lad rejoined, with disgust, "when everything's in code I don't have the hang of. No, sir; the operator could send a message to Kaiser Bill himself right under my ears and I be none th' wiser."

"What we want to do," old Bowles put in, with his best board-of-directors manner, "is to get in touch immediately with some wireless station in Brazil; tell them there's mutiny and sudden death on this island, and ask when a boat's coming to take off the survivors. We needn't say we're using a secret German wireless station to communicate with them."

"Right-o!" chirped little Baker. "Neutrality or no neutrality, we want to get away from here before those beggars back in camp make a search for us and discover this place. Anyway"—this with a grin—"Ford and I aren't neutral; we're jolly good enemy persons."

We finally compromised with Strindberg with the suggestion that we make

an offer to the red-headed lieutenant in the coal hole that in return for sending our message of appeal to Brazil we would permit his operators full use of the instrument. The Swede hurried off to hurl German consonants through the grating in the cave door. We anxiously awaited his return.

"The lieutenant defies us," was Strindberg's report a few minutes later. "He will not believe we have a wireless operator with us; says we are all English enemies, and that just as soon as the commander of the *Karlsruhe,* which is not two hundred miles away from Trinidad, discovers no answers are coming to his messages, he will put his cruiser over here to investigate. Then we will all be shot. That lieutenant is a very angry man." Strindberg's face showed his full belief in this last statement.

"Well, when the *Karlsruhe* comes, we'll have to hatch another scheme," I boldly asserted. "In the meantime, we've got a clear line from here to Brazil, or Key West, for that matter, and we'd better call central while the calling is good."

The others agreed with me, even over Strindberg's scruples, and I went to the power house to stoke up the fires and hoist the revolutions of the dynamo. In less than a half hour I was back, and we all went to the wireless room.

It was in the spirit of people entering a den of black magic that we opened the door leading to that mysterious chamber of polished rods, giant flasks, and wire coils. I for one had never seen the interior of a wireless room other than the little one aboard the *Castle Drummoch;* the wire tentacles and potent vitals of this remote central station of hidden air routes was as awe-inspiring as the deadly clean interior of an operating room. We all crowded close in a common impulse of shivering wonder when Ford sat down before the desk and slipped the listening harness over his head.

A full minute of breathless pause. The boy reached up to graduated horizontal rods before him, and, with a turnscrew, shifted them back and forth slowly, tentatively. He was feeling the air, as an oil borer feels the vibrations on the shafting sent up by the pounding tools hundreds of feet below. Of a sudden he reached for a pad and pencil and began furiously to set down detached letters and numerals. We watched him, fascinated; followed stroke for stroke the building of meaningless gibberish on the white page of the scratch pad. I noticed that what he put down was a recurring set of the same letters and digits: "Cr—2-anz—Cr—2—anz," something like that.

The lad suddenly dropped his pencil, jerked the receivers off his ears, and turned a pinched face toward us.

"Code!" he whispered. "German code, like as not—'tisn't R. N. R. Morse, at least. And it's comin' mighty strong—not more'n three hundred miles away, at most. It's a call—don't you see?—a call for this station, I lay any bet."

"Must be a code book—the German naval code—around here somewhere," Strindberg hazarded. "In one of those drawers, there."

Ford helped him rummage the drawers. A paper-backed German novel, a bundle of worn letters snapped together by a rubber band, and then, under a pad of wireless blanks, a thin, paper-bound booklet with the cover torn off. Strindberg pawed through its pages eagerly. Looking over his shoulder, I could see that each page was filled with a double column of codified German script. Strindberg murmured citations to himself, and then exclaimed:

"The naval code undoubtedly this is. But whether the latest, the one in use in war times we cannot tell. Each month

—sometimes oftener—they change, you know."

"Look for 'Cr' or 'Cr—2,'" Ford called over his shoulder. He had the receivers again at his ears, and his boy's face was strained in the effort to decipher the faint *tick, tick* which he alone could hear. The Swede riffled the pages of the code book for a minute.

"Here! 'Trinidad Obersee station—Cr—2,'" he quoted "'Our call—Cr—2.'"

He leaned over the wireless lad's shoulder and pointed the line in the code. Ford released his ears from the rubber dampers as he read.

"Then that is th' *Karlsruhe* calling us," he said, very low. "Th' *Karlsruhe* or some other Dutch cruiser. Now—now we're in for a rum go!"

All of us were a little shaken by the thing. Here to this mystery room on desert Trinidad was coming an imperious summons—coming from out of the white, sunlit void; but no less real, no less peremptory than if it had been thundered in a voice of iron at the very door. Away over beyond a dim horizon men with the right to know were questioning our silence. They would question again and again; but when no answer came they on their ship of war would swiftly span the miles of ocean between them and us—and would seek their answer at the mouths of guns. The air was spinning a trap to nab us.

We took council. Impossible to use the wireless to send our own appeal for help, we reasoned, when the acute ears of the *Karlsruhe* would catch the import of the alien message as soon as a Brazil station. Impossible, equally, to let our wireless mouth remain dumb, for investigation would surely follow such a course. We must talk to the cruiser; we must borrow the glib speech of the rightful masters of the key and talk in a way to deceive the listeners away off in the war vessel's whispering room. And we must do it soon. Perhaps already the cruiser's sharp bow was turned our way, and she was racing to Trinidad to discover why the great voice from Nauen had failed.

Our sensations were like those of a cracksman with sandpapered finger keen to feel the fall of the hidden tumblers as he turns this way and that the dials of the safe combination; for we set ourselves to compose from the code book a message for the *Karlsruhe*. First we found the code name of the cruiser, "Ts—6"; then laboriously we picked out of the maze of the code columns this message:

Karlsruhe—have you called? Dynamo troubles—current interruption—repairs——

"We'll leave th' end up in th' air that way," Ford sagely remarked. "They'll think our spark failed just as we got hooked up with them."

The boy carefully wrote out the message, with interlinear code, and practiced sending with his finger off the key several times over so as to give the semblance of an accustomed hand. Then he began sliding levers back and forth before him—"stepping the spark down to make it sound weak." Ready, he smoothed back his hair nervously with both hands and laid a finger on the key.

"A-s-s-sh—Ash—ash—A-s-s-sh!"

Blue flames twisted and writhed in the big jars; the splitting, tearing noise of the hurling spark was nerve snapping. We huddled closer together, we uninitiated who now beheld the lightning carry our lie to the wide world.

"A-s-s-sh—crash—crash—a-s-s-sh!"

Just as Ford was about to finish he made a quick movement with his free hand among the vitals of the machine, and the jumping blue fire wilted in transit. The clever boy was heightening the effect of a failing current to fool the *Karlsruhe* receiver. Then he took his hand off the key and sat in a

tense, listening attitude for several minutes. Abruptly he leaned forward, as if the better to hear, and again he wrote senseless lines of letters and numerals on the pad.

"Good Lord, that Dutchman is a chatterer for fair!" Ford groaned, and dropped the receivers.

We had to puzzle over the translation of that message for a full half hour before we had it entire. "Trinidad: Forward Nauen general orders immediately upon repairs," it said. "Now five hours overdue. Imperative we have them.—KARLSRUHE."

"That must mean daily dispatch from the general staff itself," Strindberg hazarded. "It must have come in either just before we took possession here or during the time we were occupied in locking up the wireless squad and getting our meal. What can we do? We cannot make a counterfeit of the Nauen message, that's certain."

"Nor can we send our own call to the Brazil station while the *Karlsruhe's* loafing around within hearing distance from the Trinidad dynamo to be 'repaired,'" I added. "Here we are with connections to safety and rescue all ready to plug in, and we don't dare use them."

It seemed, indeed, a maddening situation, and one with no solution that did not spell danger at every turn. Perhaps we had succeeded in fooling the *Karlsruhe* for the minute; maybe her suspicions were aroused, and the demand for the general orders from Nauen was a deliberate test of our genuineness. Certain it was that the kaiser's wily cruiser, herself a hunted thing, would not let the only link between herself and the directing board back in Berlin be broken without makink an effort to ascertain the cause, and repair the damage. We usurpers there at the wireless station were in the position of the classic hunter who had the bear by the tail and didn't dare let go.

Go on out and play around in th' sun, please," Ford finally spoke up. "Leave me alone here with this old spark jerker to think out a scheme to bash 'em with."

The lad was obeyed. For now he had become the most important strategist of our little force, and all our hopes and fears were centered in the end of his forefinger—the "sending" finger. I went to busy myself in the power house, where I plied slicing bar and oil can in putting myself on terms of acquaintance with the boiler and engine. Winifred set herself to cook a meal for the luckless Germans in the coal hole, whose commanding lieutenant again repudiated Strindberg's renewed offer of compromise. Quick dusk came on, and after that the tropic dark.

Ford came in from the wireless room to our evening meal with a great hope in his eyes. He pretended much mystery, and would not answer our eager questions with anything more satisfying than, "Just you wait." After we had finished, he gravely summoned us into the wireless room, lit now by heavy incandescents set among the snaky wire coils along the ceiling. The boy picked up a sheet of paper from the table and passed it from hand to hand for inspection. We saw nothing on it but a botch of numerals and letters.

"What's that, you rise to remark?" Ford chirped, with a wide grin. "W'y, that's th' British admiralty's naval code for use by his majesty's cruisers in th' South Atlantic. What d'yuh think of it?"

Strindberg looked up, with a puzzled face.

"I cannot see——" he began.

"Ow, don't you!" Ford chortled. "Well, I think it's a pretty good code, for I made it myself, an' I've been shootin' it through th' air for th' past half hour before dinner." The boy laughed outright at our surprise. Then

he rattled on in high-pitched excitement:

"Out of my own little nut I made it. Part reg'lar R. N. R. code, you know; part just made up for th' occasion. None too foxy but what th' wireless chief aboard th' *Karlsruhe* could worry sense out of it when it came hoppin' in over his receivers. It would look to him like a pretty leaky admiralty code, all right; but then, th' Dutch always say th' British navy is careless an' slipshod.

"So what do I do? W'y, at four-fifteen I sends out this message, strong as th' current will carry, so's to make th' *Karlsruhe* chaps think it's comin' from near to hand: *'Berwick,* detach yourself for scout duty—proceed top speed in advance of squadron general direction Trinidad island—*Drake.*"

"Th' *Berwick,* you see, is a light cruiser—probably one of those in th' brush with th' *Karlsruhe* when we were aboard th' Dutchman. Th' *Drake* is flagship of th' British South Atlantic squadron; I know that for a fact."

The wireless lad paused to let full understanding of his daring deceit sink in. I saw admiration flood Strindberg's eyes. Ford rattled on:

"Then at five o'clock I taps off another little joker: *'Drake,* smoke sighted west-sou'west our position—*Berwick.'* Which gets this answer hot off th' griddle: 'Keep smoke in view—squadron coming up.'"

"What then?" Strindberg whispered.

"Nothing. That was two hours ago; I've been givin' th' *Karlsruhe* a chance to leg it away from Trinidad fast as she can."

"Have you sounded out the *Karlsruhe,* to see if she's still in radio touch?" the Swede then asked.

"That's what I'm going to do now," was Ford's ready answer. "Hold hard everybody!"

With the German code book before him, the wireless lad began to tap the key. Once more we saw the play of lightning in the heavy jars, heard the crash of the speeding spark. Twice Ford gave the *Karlsruhe's* code call; twice listened intently. He wrote nothing.

"I toned th' spark down to three hundred miles," he said over his shoulder, "an' not a peep out of th' *Karlsruhe.* Either they've skipped, or they don't dare answer, for fear of our patent, made-to-order British squadron overhearin' an' locatin' their spark."

"So now——" I began.

"Now for th' reg'lar old S. O. S. call for help for all th' world to hear," Ford replied. "We don't care who picks it up—Brazilian government wireless or any old lime-juicer loafing around these parts."

"Crash—ash—crash! Crash—ash—crash!" The spark writhed and spit. Again and again the boy sent the international call for help winging out into the dark while the rest of us, shoulder to shoulder in the strain of the moment, waited.

"Hai! Answer!" the boy at the desk shouted, as one hand slipped nervously along the tuning lever to make sharper the whisper coming to his ears. He began to repeat aloud what the returning spark told him:

"Got you, S. O. S. Give position—what danger? This is Brazilian cruiser *Santos.*"

"Passengers British ship *Castle Drummoch*—Trinidad island." Ford was shouting the words of his reply as he tapped them off on the key. "Mutiny—murder—come—east—side—signal—fire—hurry."

There was a wait, and again Ford repeated aloud the answering message:

"Bound Trinidad already take off passengers—arrive east side at dawn."

"Thank God!" Winifred murmured, her voice breaking into a sob. She squeezed Pops' chubby face between

her hands, and kissed him in a sudden gust of hysteria.

"Please—your hands—*up!*"

We turned to the door behind us.

There, with the little round mouth of an automatic searching our faces from the end of his outstretched arm, stood Lieutenant Commander von Helwich, of the cruiser *Karlsruhe*.

CHAPTER XII.

An apparition—a trick of the nerves wrought by our dabbling with the black magic of the wireless—this was the first conscious impression I had the instant of that appalling surprise. But as quickly it was gone. Very real was that unwavering round eye of steel searching our faces as if coolly chosing a victim; nothing unsubstantial about the white, set face behind it. The lips beneath the partly uptwisted mustache spoke again:

"Ah—Miss Bowles, pardon! Be so good as to lower your hands. I did not, of course, intend—— That a lady was present I did not at first see. Thank you. For the rest, kindly pass through this door one at a time into the other room, keeping your hands above your head. March!"

Like guilty schoolboys, we filed past the Prussian, arms high. He searched each of us rapidly as we went by—each except Winifred, to whom he bowed with a slightly satirical nod of the head. When we were all in the larger room, he stepped out of the wireless chamber, closed and locked the door behind him, putting the key in his pocket. All of us kept our eyes on him, fascinated. With returning calmness, I noted the unusual uniform he wore—brown dungarees in one piece from neck to feet, bound tightly by drawstrings at wrists and ankles. On his head was a curiously shaped helmet of the prevailing brown, which was tied under his chin by broad flaps.

"Please be seated on the side of the table away from the door," Von Helwich quietly commanded. Again we obeyed mechanically. He took his place in front of the closed door giving onto the rock shelf outside. Though he lowered his revolver arm, he kept the weapon in his grasp. For a long minute the tableau was unchanged; we, still in a daze, kept our eyes on this tall, unworldly figure in close-fitting brown, who had dropped upon us out of the dark; he surveyed each face before him with an oddly dispassionate stare in his blue eyes.

"So!" he began, and in that short ejaculation he compressed a world of meaning. "Who is the commander of this war expedition, may I ask?" None answered. Each was too busy revolving in his mind the unbelievable development of the last minute. Von Helwich waited for a while, then bowed formally to Winifred.

"Miss Bowles, I cannot believe you more than the innocent onlooker to this act of war against the German government. You may speak for these others, please."

Winifred caught her breath, and the color surged into her cheeks.

"You are privileged to your beliefs, Lieutenant Commander von Helwich," she began in a voice tanged with sharpness. "But you make a mistake when you consider me an 'innocent onlooker.' Nobody here is more guilty of a desire to save his life than I am."

"So?" murmured Von Helwich, a bit taken back by the girl's show of spirit. "Is it to save your lives you and these gentlemen come here and endanger all of his majesty's ships with your—foolishness? Do you consider the cost of this act of yours?"

"If you will address your questions to me, lieutenant——" I began.

"Silence!" The blue eyes flamed at me for an instant, then turned to rest again on Winifred. Under the cold

light from an incandescent over her head I saw her lips tighten and under her long lashes smoldering fires. "Miss Bowles," he continued, "do you care to make explanations of this private war against the German navy?"

"Explanations—maybe; apologies, no!" she answered. "And explanations only to the proper person."

Von Helwich flushed. "I represent the commander of the cruiser *Karlsruhe,*" he said, carefully picking his words. "I am sent here by that commander to investigate the remarkable actions of your companions—and yourself. Please consider me the proper person."

The duel between these two, the stiff Prussian officer and this daring little aristocrat from Manhattan—oh, it was a wonderful thing! Von Helwich, in singling out the girl to act as spokesman for us culprits, had counted on a woman's weakness dissolving before awe of his authority and fear of consequences. Instead, he found himself flaunted and defied by a chit of a girl, while men looked on his discomfiture. But his pride was stung, and he would not admit defeat. He tried a new tack:

"Miss Bowles, there may be circumstances to explain this extraordinary action of taking possession of the wireless station. It may be that when the commander of the *Karlsruhe* hears, he will understand perfectly your—ah—justification, and forgive. Do you care to——"

"The commander of the *Karlsruhe* has much to ask forgiveness for from us," Winifred caught him up. "Before landing helpless passengers upon this island he secretly took away whatever weapons they might have to defend themselves against murderers and mutineers of the crew. He even took away the revolvers of the ship's officers, without which they were powerless to keep order. Does he send by you apology for this act?"

"I know nothing of it," the lieutenant commander answered shortly.

"Then he cannot complain because we, to save our lives, came here and used his wireless station to summon help." Winifred was beaming on Von Helwich now, bringing to bear upon him the full battery of her leveling eyes. "Mr. Cawthorne, here, discovered your station just in time, you see. So last night when the crew seized the camp and started robbing and burning he brought us here. He didn't intend to capture your station; he just had to because the officer you had in charge was so stupid."

"I have his story already," Von Helwich interrupted. "I have released him and his men; they are outside the door now."

"Well," Winifred rattled on, "we wanted to use your wireless to call for help, but your ship wouldn't let us; it kept asking questions about things we didn't know anything about. So——"

"So one of you, who has a very marked English touch, tried to fool us," the *Karlsruhe's* officer caught her up, permitting himself a smile for the first time during the colloquy. "He was very clumsy—so clumsy as to be amusing. So I was sent here to investigate." Ford swallowed hard, and looked at me pitifully. Von Helwich opened his left hand and displayed some scraps of paper; on them was written poor Ford's beautiful "British admiralty code" he had used to devil the *Karlsruhe* into running away from a mythical English squadron. The Prussian glanced at the script, a smile curling up the stiff ends of his mustache.

"'*Berwick,* detach yourself for scout duty,'" he read. "So! Very pretty! The *Berwick* is at present off Havana, and the *Drake* left Halifax four days ago. What of this, Miss Bowles?"

It was Winifred's turn to be flus-

tered. She looked appealingly around the circle of our faces.

"Well—well, we thought if we sent that message maybe the *Karlsruhe* would go away and let us call for aid without eavesdropping."

"Ah, this interesting information must have come to the *Karlsruhe* after I left it," was Von Helwich's comment. "The *Karlsruhe* has never been more than a hundred miles from this spot all day; now she is much closer than that."

"Then the *Karlsruhe* knows," I said, "that the Brazilian cruiser *Santos* will be here at dawn to take us off. We had word to that effect just before you arrived."

Von Helwich regarded me steadily for a minute. Then, "It is far more likely that you will leave the island on the *Karlsruhe,*" he said.

"That will be even nicer," Winifred exclaimed, with a meaning smile for the Prussian. "Your officers are so courteous, and, of course, the Brazilians might not be so nice." Von Helwich raised his shoulders ever so slightly. "And please remember to have your men build a signal fire somewhere near dawn," the girl continued. "We promised the Brazilian cruiser, you see, to have a fire burning so as to guide them."

The threat in Von Helwich's promise that we would quit the island on the *Karlsruhe* was patent, but Winifred preferred not to understand. Insensibly the girl had changed the atmosphere from the first hot sparring of wits between herself and Von Helwich to something almost approaching ease. We saw him slip his revolver into an opening at the belt of his one-piece suit. He leaned back against the edge of the table with folded arms, regarding us all, and particularly the piquant face of the girl, with something of amusement in his eyes. We felt like schoolboys during "oratoricals," all seated there in a row under the eye of this satirical master. But our champion was not a bit abashed. She propped her chin on her hands and looked up at Von Helwich quizzically.

"Of course"—she began with the ghost of a smile fluttering about the corners of her mouth—"of course, curiosity is said to have been fatal to a cat; but I am immune. How did you get here, Herr Lieutenant?"

"By air automobile, quite of course," he answered. "I have made the trip similarly several times. My plane and its chauffeur wait on the beach."

"Quite of course," Winifred acknowledged demurely. "That explains a new bolt Mr. Cawthorne picked up on the plateau; the bolt led to the discovery of your wireless station, and our coming here. It was a useful bolt—to us."

"So?"

"Yes, indeed; so little a thing as a bolt dropped from your 'air automobile' was the means of saving our lives. And, of course, you, Herr von Helwich, will not interfere when Providence plays on our side."

"The matter of your future is not in my hands," Von Helwich quickly put in. "And now, if you please, for the night the gentlemen, with the exception of your father, Miss Bowles, will find comfortable beds on the coal sacks where they so recently had the wireless crew. You, Miss Bowles, and your father will please make yourself comfortable in this room, after I have for a few minutes used the wireless to communicate with my commander. So, gentlemen——"

We four, Strindberg, Baker, Ford, and myself, marched, single file, out into the dark. Grinning Germans accompanied us to the coal hole. The door slammed behind us. In five minutes I was down in the lowest caves of sleep.

I was awakened by a thumping fist on my back and a guttural, *"Raus!"* A

boyish face, stretched in a friendly grin, bent over me. In turn, the German lad awakened my companions. Light was streaming in through the wide-opened door. By friendly signs we were invited to the boiler room in the power house, and there breakfast awaited us—heavy bowls of some sort of bean porridge and coffee. Through Strindberg, we were told we were free to do as we pleased "until the *Karlsruhe* comes."

After breakfast, I stepped out on the rock platform. It was drenched with the light of the newly risen sun; beyond its rim lay the sea, fiery blue as freshly mined opal in matrix. The air was clean and full of sparkle.

I looked to find Von Helwich somewhere about, but he was not to be seen. Just as I was turning to reënter the power house I caught a flutter of white over the top of a low ridge of rocks bounding the rim of the station ledge. A puff of wind carried the golden glint of blown hair out beyond the edge of a bowlder. I hurried across the intervening yards, and came upon Winifred standing alone, her face to the sea. She turned, startled, at my approach; but instantly I had her smile, and her cool hands gave me "Good morning!"

"Got up early to see a friend off," she explained, before I had a chance to put a question. "Look!" She pointed with one slim arm off to sea almost in the path of the sun. I tried to follow the direction of her pointing, but the sun was in my eyes, dazzling them.

"No; over this way." She twisted my head with a quick grip of her hands, and again pointed. Then I saw, away out at sea, rising and falling with the steady undulations of a gull's flight, two tiny black splinters, like the parallel marks of the "equals" sign in arithmetic.

"Von Helwich," she said.

Even as I looked, the splinters became sun motes, disappeared. But over in the sun's eye I saw a thin column of smoke rising lazily from the horizon. The smoke appeared to lie in the same direction the disappearing sea plane had taken. Winifred had noted the smoke, too.

"The *Karlsruhe,*" I said, my voice drooping in dejection. "The Germans said we were free to do as we pleased until the *Karlsruhe* came. Suppose your friend Von Helwich's going out to meet her."

"He didn't say," Winifred answered.

"This means—something serious for us, I'm afraid."

"Serious—yes." Her face was turned from me. I thought I saw dejection in the droop of her shoulders.

"For we really are guilty of making war on Germany," I continued. "Whatever Von Helwich may have seen to justify our course, the matter is, as he said, out of his hands."

"I think he will do his best for us," the girl returned faintly. For a minute there was silence between us.

"Six days ago we were prisoners aboard the *Karlsruhe*. Now, after all that's happened, to go back on the *Karlsruhe* as prisoners——"

"That would seem to leave us just where we began," Winifred murmured. "Unless——"

"Unless?"

"Unless in these six days—longer than six years—we have come to learn —something. Enough experience——"

Again I looked out at that thin film of smoke across the sun's eye—the black portent of more trouble—gravest trouble of all in these tremendous six days of action. My eyes turned to the girl beside me, to the round, rose-tinted cheek so adorable, so tantalizingly close. Her eyes I could not see, though I yearned to.

"We—I have come to learn something," I faltered, my lips all at once

heavy and clumsy to frame what my heart cried. "I—have learned—how far away can be one—loved. Winifred——"

"Far?" she echoed, and her cheek was still turned from me.

"Far from—from a hard-boned, rough sort of fellow like me—yes. I would not dare—I wouldn't try to say these things if—if that smoke out there wasn't coming closer every minute."

"Then you—then you——"

Love you—yes."

She turned to me, her face rosy-red, her dear eyes shining through tears like blue flowers wet with rain. Before I knew it, her firm, cool arms were about my neck, and her hands, on my head, were drawing my lips down to hers.

"My man! My man!" she cried, between laughter and tears. "Man in everything but love, but in love a little boy! You make me propose to you. I have to scare you with fresh danger to unlock your lips. There! And there! And there!

"Now look back of you, you Man-Afraid-of-His-Heart! See the black smoke boiling from the power-house stack. The signal, big ninny! Now look out there where the sun is. That's the *Santos,* coming to take us off first, then the others at the camp!"

Four days later, in Pernambuco, at the very hour when Swivel-eye Hoskins and four other members of the *Castle Drummoch's* crew were being arraigned on charges of murder and mutiny, I met the greatest adventure of them all. That was when I stood at the altar of the little English chapel and saw Winifred, on the arm of old Pops, approaching up the aisle. Strindberg, who stood beside me, whispered: "Buck up, man; buck up! This isn't nearly as dangerous as making war on the kaiser!" Somehow I worried through my speaking part, and was launched, with my new pilot, on the golden argosy of dreams.

As we were leaving the church, a barefooted Indian boy rushed up breathlessly and put in Winifred's hands a magnificent bouquet of tiger orchids. On the attached card, in a sprawling fist, was this legend:

Good luck to the bride of the only man who ever licked yours truly,

THOMAS RADWAY.

THE END.

MR. ROBINSON'S ATHLETIC DIVERSION

NORBORNE ROBINSON, who is neither so deep as a well nor so high as a steeple, and weighs one hundred and thirty-two pounds, is fond of relating that, when he was at the University of Virginia, his prowess in athletics was grand.

"I didn't have much weight," he confides to his friends, "but I was there on the speed."

Two of his friends were discussing this swift record one day when one of them remarked:

"Robinson must have been a prominent figure in college athletics."

"That may be true," replied the other; "but what I would like to find out is what he played—right field or the second mandolin."

Luck—That Laggard

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "War, Personally Conducted," "The Spider's Web," Etc.

How an overcoat thrust on a man at the door of a restaurant helped him out of the deepest hole he was ever in

MONEY or no money, Morrison decided that he would eat about two pecks of steamed oysters, and eat them at once at the place where steamed oysters were invented.

In previous years, his prosperous ones, he had eaten, in the aggregate, bushels of steamed oysters at this famous restaurant on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, where the supreme bivalvean dish for gourmets was first evolved by a genius of imperishable renown. In those hectic years of affluence he had paid for his steamed oysters and the pint of rich, oily, old Amontillado that it had been a sacrilege not to wash them down with from a bank roll which he had become accustomed to consider bottomless. But those feasts had been enjoyed years ago, and the bottomless bank roll had long since become an unreality to be looked back upon with wonder bordering on incredulity. All the same, now that he was flat broke and hungry, he reckoned that this restaurant, where once he had flared like a torch blown upon by the steady winds from Lucky Land, owed him just about one man-size feed for the sake of old times. It mattered not at all to him whether the restaurant would take this view of it. Probably it would not. But he resolved to have the feed, anyhow. After that the consequences could take care of themselves. Hard luck, and, of late, not a little of the hunger that goes with it, had taught Morrison how to live one minute at a time. Head and shoulders back, he walked into the restaurant out of the cold drizzle of one of Washington's raw November evenings.

"Some steamed," he said to the waiter who came for his order.

"Peck, suh?" asked the waiter.

"Better make it two."

"Anythin' tuh drink with 'em, suh?"

"A pint of the old sherry, the Amontillado; and don't have it cold."

Morrison laughed inwardly, recklessly, at his old note of easy authority in giving the order. It had been long since he had taken that tone, with a waiter. And he was taking it now without the price of his meal—of any meal, anywhere—in his pocket!

The cozily old-fashioned downstairs room of the restaurant looked unreally familiar to him. Familiar, because all of the well-remembered furnishings and accessories of the room were unchanged, as, in fact, they had been unchanged since long before the Civil War. Unreal, because, with his keen memory for the faces of waiters, black and white, who had served him in the days of his opulence, he failed now to recognize one shiny negro countenance among all the black servitors swarming back and forth between the kitchen and the dining room. Unreal, too, because now he was dining alone—and without the price.

In the other years, when he had been a nightly patron of the restaurant during the Benning race meetings, his wife had always been with him. He had married her, the only daughter of a rough-hewn handler of thoroughbreds, soon after he had graduated from the silks of a successful jockey to the rôle of a shrewd and lucky trainer of race horses. Three years after their marriage she had left him. After trying in vain for a year to find her he had abandoned the search. He had not heard from her, nor ever come upon the slightest clew as to what had become of her. But so sharply had he awakened to the knowledge, when it was too late, of how grievously he was to blame, that he had gone down rapidly after her disappearance. When he returned to his business of training race horses after his year of fruitless hunting for his wife, his "punch" was gone, and with that his luck. He had never had any sort of prosperity since the day of her vanishment.

Glancing now around the room, he recognized most of the buzzing, flashy-looking men at the tables, a few of them with their womenfolk, as race-followers. They were, in the main, hard-eyed and hard-jawed bookmakers and preoccupied, gloomy-looking men of the tribe called plungers. But none of them knew Morrison. A racing generation covers very few years, and these men belonged to the new gang. And Morrison, beaten to the ground by the vicissitudes of the racing game, had now become a mere race-track hanger-on, a piker, one of the "dollar bettors"—when he could get the dollar—so lordlily loathed by bookmakers who forget that it is mainly of the hard-wrung "dollar bets" of the pikers that bookmakers' bank rolls are builded.

Though really voracious, he ate slowly under the appraising eye of his black waiter, exercising the studied repression of the true gastronome and putting into play the little-remembered rites attending the consumption of the very special food before him. He refused to permit his gustatory enjoyment to be marred by the reflection, which he successfully relegated for the time to the custody of his subconscious mind, that each passing moment was bringing trouble nearer to him. He spent an hour over his oysters and wine. Then, with a velvety cigar, he leaned back in his chair and looked the situation in the eyes.

He saw at once that it would be no trick at all for him simply to walk out, during one of his waiter's prolonged absences, without paying. The diners settled with the waiters for their checks, so that the cashier at the desk was not required to keep an eye on patrons passing out. But Morrison dismissed with contempt the thought of trying such a plan. It would be a cheap, slinky trick. He had been pretty badly battered in the process of becoming definitely and hopelessly broke. But, a gambler from his heart, he subscribed to the gambler's code, which, even though it passes over the larger coups of crookedness, heavily penalizes the littler meannesses. To stroll blithely out without settling his score, while the waiter was in the kitchen, would be a tawdry counter jumper's method meeting the issue. It would be, it was true, the easiest way. But it was not the way for him.

He had had his feed, was glowing with the comfort of repletion. He had got what he had come after, his mind made up to take his medicine. Now he would toss his check upon the cashier's desk, inform that clear-eyed young man that he had no money wherewith to settle it, and politely but forthrightly invite him to go as far as he liked. He would not even tell the cashier, in extenuation, that in former years he had been a heavy-spending, paying-on-the-nail patron of the restau-

rant. That, too, would be cheap, playing the baby act.

He pushed his chair back, and had half risen, when from the table behind him came the high-pitched words of a sudden quarrel. The buzz in the room ceased instantly. Before Morrison could turn his head to look at the two men at the table back of him, he heard the unmistakable thudding sound of a human fist landing heavily on a human countenance. There was a crash of dishes falling from a tipped-over table.

Morrison, kicking his chair back of him, whirled in time to see the big man who had been the recipient of the first blow swiftly recover his balance and aim a boxer's right-hand uppercut at the unskillfully guarded chin of the still bigger man who had struck him. Undersized, but with muscles of rattan from his life in the open and in the stables of thoroughbreds since his childhood, and with the courage of an old race rider, Morrison leaped between the two men and caught the uppercut on his own guard. The man at whom it had been aimed seized the occasion to strike at the other over Morrison's head, landing heavily again on his man's face. This so enraged his opponent, easily the better boxer of the two, that he swept Morrison out of his way with a swift push of both powerful hands, then leaped at his man like a tiger. Morrison, a peacemaker of parts in many a rough-and-tumble of this sort, wedged himself between the two men, who had got into a clinch, and, runt though he was, literally tore them apart with hands that often had been a match even for the devilishness of enraged horses.

Out of the tail of his eye he saw the flying wedge of black waiters, several huge huskies among them, coming at a gallop from the kitchen. He prefigured that he would meet the usual fate of the peacemaker, having often met it before, and he was perfectly right. The two waiters at the apex of the catapulting column of blacks, not having seen the beginning of the fight because they had been in the kitchen when it started, laid hold of Morrison, not only because they regarded him as one of the participants in the battle, but because, being the smallest of the three struggling men, he was the fairest mark for their bouncing activities.

Clutching him tightly on either side by the arms, the two blacks sped him to the front door, which another waiter was holding open. Morrison did not resist. There was no reason why he should. The merit of the situation had flashed upon him the instant he saw the galloping approach of the waiters. He would be thrown out as a trouble maker. Well, there would be some style to that. It would not, at any rate, be sneaking out. Moreover, he would be unjustly thrown out. Could the restaurant reasonably expect a man, chancing further assault, to return and pay his bill after having been unfairly hurled into the street because he had attempted to stop a fight between a pair of bullies? He reckoned not. So he unresistingly permitted the pair of husky waiters to hustle him swiftly to and through the door. It was a providential way out of his mess. It was far better certainly than any "cheapskate" way.

The waiters did not let go of his arms until they had propelled him to the middle of the sidewalk.

"Yo'-all bettuh beat it befo' de cops come," one of them suggested to him decently enough in relaxing his grip.

The cold drizzle had not ceased falling. Morrison, feeling it keenly after the warmth, remembered something.

"My hat and overcoat!" he called to the waiter, who, pushing his mate ahead of him, had reëntered the restaurant and was closing the door. The waiter turned and poked his head through the half-open door.

"I'll git yo' hat an' ovuhcoat; yo'-all stay wheah yo' is," he called back.

That suited Morrison. He had but a quarter of a minute to wait. Then the door was opened again. Through the open door, Morrison saw that now at least half a dozen men were involved in a free-for-all fight which the black waiters were powerless to quell. The racket issuing from the restaurant of tables and chairs being overturned and of smashing dishes sounded like a riot. His hat and an overcoat were thrust upon him by the waiter. It was his own hat—but not his overcoat.

"De po-lee is comin' in de side do'," excitedly gasped the waiter. "Yo'-all bettuh git busy with yo' laigs, ef yo' is askin' me."

"But, look here!" shouted Morrison as the negro started to close the door. "This is not my overcoat!" holding out the handsome fur-lined garment for the waiter to take.

But the waiter had shut the door with a bang. Morrison, hearing a great clangor of a gong, looked up Pennsylvania Avenue and saw a motor patrol wagon packed with policemen steering for the restaurant. He never had cared much for near views of police-patrol wagons. He clapped his hat on his head and slipped his arms into the delightfully soft, warm fur of the seal-lined sleeves. He knew the feel—but it had been many a craggy year since he had owned a fur-lined overcoat. This one was too large for him, but whose fur-lined overcoat is not too large?

He swiftly crossed the avenue, and, from a corner, safely out of any minglement with the mêlée, watched the restaurant. The policemen, leaping from the patrol wagon as one man and darting into the restaurant, quickly reappeared, dragging eight or ten bruised, struggling men with them. The fighters were thrust into the screened wagon, and away the wagon shot. One of the arrested men, no doubt, Morrison figured, was the owner of the splendid fur-lined coat which now was so effectually keeping the cold of the raw November night from his own back. Well, so much the worse for the "pinched" man, and so much the better for himself. His own overcoat had become pretty shabby, and it was far from warm. This one had been literally thrust upon him. And had he not tried to give it back? Probably the coat belonged to a prosperous bookmaker with a bank roll as big around as a main steam pipe. Well, he could get another fur-lined coat. Morrison, at any rate, could not see himself going to a police station to seek the owner of the garment which had been forced upon him. Nor, having made a proper and providential get-away from the restaurant where he owed for a dinner, could he entertain the idea of going back there to hunt for the owner of the coat, if perchance the owner had not been among the arrested ones.

In buttoning the overcoat, his hand felt something softly unyielding in the right-hand breast pocket. There was no mistaking that feel—a wallet! He would not take the wallet from the pocket on the street—there were prying eyes, and his conduct might be irresponsible, if not actually crazy, if he were to find that the wallet contained sure-enough sizable money. He hurried to a hotel on the next corner. There was nobody in the men's writing room. He sat down at one of the tables and pulled out the wallet—a long, fine black leather affair with many compartments. All of the compartments were empty save one. Morrison's fingers trembled as he lifted the neat, paper-ribboned packet of yellow-brownish bills from this compartment. They were delightfully fresh, unused bills, and gave forth that pleasing, brittle, crackly sound when he flicked them over in counting them. He remem-

bered that all paper money current in Washington is liable to be quite fresh and new; there were no greasy, worn bills extant there, with the treasury department so handy. In the old years he had always enjoyed the fresh, crisp Washington paper money.

There were thirty-five one-hundred-dollar gold notes in the packet. Morrison replaced the bills in the compartment and placed the wallet in the breast pocket of his under coat. He gazed unblinkingly at the coiled thread of the electric bulb over the writing table, his lips moving in an exultant whisper.

"I'm in business again," he said.

The same code to which he had adhered in refusing to sneak out of the restaurant, leaving an unpaid bill, sustained him again. To keep the overcoat and the wallet would not be cheap. It would not be piking or little. Here was a big chunk of luck. He had done nothing to bring it about. The luck had been tossed at him. Well, he was ready for it. It had been a long time since any luck had come his way.

He walked through the rain to the mean lodging house on E Street where he had a hall room at three dollars a week. He found a padlock on his door. But he had expected that. He was a day overdue with his rent. The snuffy, furnace-begrimed landlord appeared in the hall with a snarl on his lips. Morrison silenced and stunned him by pressing a one-hundred-dollar bill into his hand. The landlord got the bill changed at the corner groggery. Morrison took his battered, thinly packed old suit case out of the mean rookery. A quarter of an hour later he was established in a handsome room, with a bath adjoining, at the best hotel in Washington.

II.

Five minutes after he had established himself in the hotel room, the telephone bell rang.

"Gentleman by the name of Scrubby Shugrue calling," announced the young woman desk operator a little ironically.

"Send him up!" Morrison directed.

Scrubby Shugrue, his old training foreman. He had not cut Scrubby's trail for years, and there was nobody —well, no man, at any rate—whom he would rather see. But how had the old foreman known of his presence at the hotel?

A timid, hesitating knock on the door, and a shabby, grizzled, little man, with a wispy, walrus mustache and flickering, keen gray eyes, shambled in. Morrison greeted him with two hard-pressing hands and a shout of genuine pleasure.

"I seen you comin' in with your grip, and I reco-nized you even if there wasn't nothin' but your ears showin' underneath that pelt-lined ulster," explained Scrubby. "Been about five year since I seen you last, ain't it, Ed?"

"Just five," replied Morrison, his forehead creasing. It was just five years, too, since his wife had gone.

They told about themselves and talked horse. Scrubby was foreman for a noted trainer then racing his string at Benning. Morrison frankly spoke of the lean years that had been his ever since—well, there'd been five of those years. Scrubby had known Morrison's wife from her childhood, had been present at her marriage to Morrison, had watched the progress of their life together until its finish.

"Haven't had much heart for anything since the girl dropped out," Morrison added to his brief account of the way things had been going with him. "Had a little twist of luck to-day for the first time. Maybe that's a new start."

"And the first thing you done was to go buy a fur-lined benny for yourself," said Scrubby, with a grin. Morrison grinned back noncommittally. "Still the same old Ed," said Scrubby.

The talk veered to the form of the horses of Scrubby's employer's string, and the little man suddenly broke out:

"I knowed there was somethin' I wanted to tell you. What old clomper d'ye s'pose I'm carryin' around with the string?"

Morrison shook his head.

"Well, he'll be as glad to see you as you'll be to see him," said Scrubby. "Old San Jacinto!"

San Jacinto! Morrison had lost track of the horse years ago. He had been a stake horse in Morrison's hands. San Jacinto had won many a good race for him, until, his feet going bad in front, he had dropped back from stake to selling class. The horse's name, heard now for the first time in so many years, brought memories swirling back upon Morrison. His wife had loved the great handsome bay stallion more than any horse in her husband's training string, and the proud, unruly brute, a bad actor that had commanded kid-glove handling from stablemen, had plainly shown his fondness for her in return. She would often visit the stables with Morrison at bedding-down time mainly to stroke San Jacinto's nose and prattle baby talk to this irritable horse that frequently had tried to savage his handlers with his teeth; and the stallion had blinked benignly and appreciatively under her caresses. Morrison could close his eyes now and see San Jacinto nuzzling in the pocket of Alice's tan coat for the lumps of sugar she kept there for her visits to his stall.

"The old toad's eight year old now, you remember," went on Scrubby. "I own him. I bought him off'n Jim Bush, the feller that took him away from you in that sellin' race, you rec'lect. Y'see, I always was kind o' stuck on the old snoozer, 'count of——" He hesitated, reddening, and went on: "Well, you 'member how Alice used to pinch the old alligator's nose and how he not on'y stood for it from her, but liked it."

Morrison nodded. "You've got a good streak tucked away in you somewhere, old scout," he said to Scrubby. The old foreman, hating to be considered sentimental, as all the best and most incurable sentimentalists do, sought to dissipate such an impression of him.

"Shucks, no!" he protested. "I on'y took him from Bush—that was after his feet went bad, and he on'y cost me a few hundred bucks—because I figgered I might be able to patch the old bird up and git a few sellin' races out o' him. That was all."

"I see," said Morrison, nodding sagely. "Well, how is he?"

Scrubby got up from his chair, took the unlighted stub of a cigar from his teeth, and walked back and forth excitedly.

"Ed," he said earnestly, "the old ballyscootin' devil's good. He's good, I'm tellin' you! I ain't never seen him much better, even when he was stake class. I got his old feet fixed up so's they don't burn him no more. Ed, the old son of a sea cook, showed me a mile 'n' a quarter work-out yistiddy mornin' that lifted my hat right off my head. The track was soft, and you 'member how that goin' always was his meat."

"Have you raced him since you've had him?" asked Morrison.

"Nope," said Scrubby, "but I'm goin' to race him right away. He's in that two-mile-'n'-a-quarter thing to-morrow, the last race. The track ought to be deep. Watch his smoke, Ed. If he is anythin' like what he was when you had him as a three-year-old, he'll run double rings around the bunch he's meetin' to-morrow."

"Eight years is pretty old for a runner, Scrubby—especially one with suspicious feet," said Morrison.

"For some hawses, you mean," amended Scrubby. "But I got this old

boy fixed up like a——" He stopped, wheeled, and broke out: "Say, Ed, come on out to the barn and have a look at him, hey? He'll be powerful glad to see you."

"When?" asked Morrison.

"Now," said Scrubby.

"You're on!" said Morrison. It would be good to see the old horse that so often had felt the caress of his wife's hands.

"Wait for me down in the lobby; I'll be there directly," he said, and Scrubby left the room.

Morrison, as soon as the door had closed upon the old foreman, stooped and pulled his hard-used suit case from beneath the bed. Raising the lid, he groped with both hands for something in the bottom of it. It was a neatly folded, cream-colored, crocheted shawl, a small affair of the sort women used to wear around their heads on chilly evenings—they were called "fascinators." A faint fragrance issued from the shawl. It was the only thing of his wife's that Morrison had. For five years he had been carrying it about in the bottom of his suit case, once in a great while taking it out and looking at it.

He double-folded it and stuffed it into one of the great slashed side pockets of the fur-lined coat. Then he joined Scrubby in the hotel lobby, and they were whizzed out to the Benning track in a taxicab.

It was after nine o'clock, and San Jacinto was standing, brooding and quiet, in his stall when Scrubby, with a lantern, and Morrison approached him down the aisle between the stalls.

"Wait till he gets the smell of you; he'll know you, I'll bet a currycomb," whispered Scrubby.

Morrison, his hands thrust into the pockets of the fur-lined coat, stood directly in front of the old horse, which, regardless of the lantern light, blinked dreamily. Suddenly San Jacinto's ears shot forward. The pupils of his big, mellow eyes became dilated. He took in a huge inhalation through his nostrils, and nickered softly. Then, his upper lip twitching, he suddenly reached his head down and nuzzled the pocket of the fur-lined coat that held the shawl. Morrison pulled the shawl out a bit so that an end of it showed. The old horse, his ears working as if on wires, and taking in deep breaths of the vague fragrance through his widened nostrils, tugged gently at the shawl with his great teeth. Morrison pressed the "fascinator" against San Jacinto's nose. The horse threw his head back, and, whinnying loudly and joyously, pressed his nostrils deep into the shawl. Morrison felt his heart thumping. He was hard hit.

"I knowed he would know you," pleasedly exclaimed Scrubby.

"He may know me," replied Morrison a little huskily, "but it's somebody else he's thinking about," and he held up the shawl so that Scrubby could see it.

"Say, Ed," asked Scrubby wonderingly, "was that hern?"

"Yes," said Morrison. "She always used to wear it over her head when she'd visit this old chap with me on my last round of the stables at night."

Scrubby spat reflectively.

"An' some boneheads says that hawses ain't got no souls!" he broke out roughly. Then, after a pause, he went on: "So you been totin' that little shawl o' Alice's aroun' all these years, have you?" He walked over in front of Morrison and asked wonderingly: "Say, Ed, why didn't you behave when you had her?"

"I dunno—I wish I had," said Morrison.

III.

Morrison was at the track shortly before noon the next day. Scrubby was going to give old San Jacinto a warm-

ing-up gallop at noon, and Morrison wanted to see the old horse work. When San Jacinto appeared, with a stout stableboy on his back, he was amazed. The old stallion, after his broken-down years, took the track on his toes, fighting for his head, favoring no one foot, his coat like burnished mahogany; a horse as hard as nails. He finished his stiff mile gallop in a light, just right perspiration, and he was not breathing hard enough to flare a candle had one been held close to his nostrils. San Jacinto, eight-year-old though he was, looked and acted like a king.

"Have a little change down on him, Ed," said Scrubby, glowing with pride in the work he had done to get the old horse back to such grand condition. "There'll be a price. The fools don't figure him at all. They think he's all through because he's eight."

"I wouldn't be afraid of his age, but of his feet," said Morrison. "He's liable to let down again in a grueling race."

"Not on this heavy track," said Scrubby. "His kinky old feet like the feel of the cool mud." He gazed disappointedly at the fleckless blue sky, for it had cleared warm overnight. "I was hoping it would rain to-day so's the track 'u'd be sloppy. He'll roll home in the slop. But he's got a swell chanct, anyhow. Have a button or two on him, Ed."

Morrison, immensely impressed by the fine condition of the old horse he once had handled, nodded.

"I'm going to back him," he said, and went into the betting ring, where, by this time, the bookmakers had put up the odds for the first race.

Once in the swirl of that mad inclosure, the gambling fever took complete possession of Morrison, as it always did. Beginning with the first race, he bet heavily and stubbornly on his own "picks," taking only into consideration the condition of the horses as that condition appealed to his practiced eye as a trainer, and giving no heed at all to the recent form of his selections as the horses actually had performed in races. It was a disastrous method. Nothing that he did or could do was right. When he arrived at the track he had had thirty-four of the handsome, brittle one-hundred-dollar notes in his pocket, and some fifty odd dollars additional, the change from the bill he had broken on the night before. The first five races took thirty-two of the yellow-brownish bills. He had come nowhere near being even "in the money" with any of his "picks." Two of the horses upon which he had bet most heavily had finished absolutely last. Another one had been virtually left at the post.

It was up to old San Jacinto to win him out. Morrison, so well knowing what the horse had been in his day of youth, tried to force himself to believe that Scrubby was right—that one or two big races might be left in the brute his wife had loved. That thought decided him—his wife had loved San Jacinto. Well, win or go broke again, he would play San Jacinto with his last dollar for the sake of the woman he had loved and would always love.

He saw that the opening price against San Jacinto, in the field of nine horses, was forty to one. The old horse was the rank outsider in the betting. Spreading the money around in half a dozen books, he took that opening odds with his remaining two hundred and fifty dollars. He stood to win ten thousand dollars if San Jacinto should come home in front.

Morrison, worn out after his long, unsuccessful afternoon of bucking the books, had a little talk with himself after he had got the last of his money down on San Jacinto.

"I'm sick of this game," ran his self-communing. "I can't stand it any more.

It takes it out of a man! I'm through. I wish the girl was back with me. I'd make a fresh start, and cut the tracks out altogether—go to work at any old thing. But I'm through, anyhow. Whether the old horse cops or not, I'm through."

He brought his teeth together as he said the last words. He meant them. Such a disillusionment and disgust comes in time, no matter how belated, to every man who follows the racing game.

But it would be good if San Jacinto were to win! He rushed out of the betting ring to the paddock where San Jacinto, all saddled and ready, was being slowly led around by Scrubby.

"D'ye still like him, Scrubby?" Morrison asked the little man.

"He'll walk in—that's how much I like him," Scrubby whispered hoarsely. "Are you backing him?"

"For the works," said Morrison.

"Good!" said Scrubby. "Same here. D'ye see that greenish-black cloud right above the grand stand?" pointing to a heavy, summerish-looking bank of blackness that was moving rapidly directly over the track. "I think that cloud'll break before they get to the post. If it does, the track'll be a quagmire of slop, and the old he-divvle comes home all by himself."

Morrison hurried back to the betting ring for shelter. The sky over the track was darkening fast, and sharp flashes of lightning, darting through the inky mass of clouds, made it certain that one of Washington's queer autumnal thunderstorms was about to begin. Great drops began to fall as the horses, San Jacinto at their head, because he was carrying the top weight, broke before the stand and cantered to the starting post.

Morrison, in the betting ring, had a thrill when he saw that, during his absence in the paddock, San Jacinto had been backed down from forty to one to six to one. There was a tip on the old horse, then! He saw shrewd men, hard-headed gamblers, the bettors of "educated money," going about the ring looking for the best price against San Jacinto. And he had got the top price! To get the top price is a thing that ever delights the soul of the gambler.

"But, win or lose," Morrison said again to himself, "I'm through. If I ever make another gamble on a horse race, I hope I never live to collect the bet if it wins."

A stiff vow. But Morrison meant to keep it.

He had reached the edge of the betting ring, from which he intended to watch the race, when the storm broke furiously. There were several great crashes of thunder. Then the rain began to full torrentially, tropically. It was almost a cloudburst. He could barely see the track from where he stood, so thick were the wind-torn sheets of falling water. In the midst of the uproar of the storm, the bell in the betting ring clanged. The horses were off from the post, a quarter of a mile up the stretch. Nobody in the stand could see the start through the barrier of rain.

Morrison, seeing that the track already had become the sloppy quagmire so longed for by Scrubby, held his breath to note what position San Jacinto would have when, after the first quarter of a mile, the horses passed the stand for the first time. He had not long to wait.

"The old fellow was a great front runner when he was a three-year-old," he was saying to himself, "but maybe now he likes to wait in behind his——"

Out of the blank, rainy wall far up the track he heard a great splashing of hoofs. Then one horse emerged from the rain wrack, going with gigantic strides, ten lengths in the lead of his field, the little black Virginia jockey

huddled up around the horse's neck, holding him under double wraps.

The horse was San Jacinto.

"San Jacinto, all by himself!" the huge crowd howled madly. The horse had been played by thousands on the strength of a tremendous tip, his looks in his preliminary gallop, and his old record as a stake horse.

Morrison did not howl, but, standing on the edge of the ring, talked quietly to himself, with electric thrills of memory—memory weaving itself about the horse and the woman who had so loved him—making his body rigid.

"Run for me, old boy," he said, not rootingly, for his lips barely moved. "Run like as if she'd just been petting you before you faced the flag. Run, old chap, for her and for me—for, if you win, I'm going to use the roll—and it'll be some roll—to start hunting for her again, and, if she's alive, I'm a-going to find her if I have to crawl to the end of the world on my hands and knees! And if she'll come back to me, I'm going to behave!"

The horses disappeared in the wall of rain in the back stretch. The race could not be seen at all. The crowd had to wait until the field should appear again in front of the stand the second time around the track. The crowd waited in a hush. Then again came the great splattering of hoofs. A horse emerged alone, going easily, with colossal strides—"in the jockey's lap," as the track vernacular has it.

The horse was San Jacinto, still ten lengths abreast of his field, the little black boy, grinning under his cap, hunched up on the old horse's neck.

"Now for the last mile—oh, you lover hawss, San Jacinto!" the crowd screamed.

Again the horses disappeared into the solid wall of wind-torn rain. But, half a minute later, when the field was toiling up the back stretch, the rain ceased suddenly. Now the horses could be seen.

San Jacinto had come back a little. Arabian, the favorite, at the turn out of the back stretch, was making his bid, though floundering badly in the muck, for Arabian was a better fast-track horse. But San Jacinto, though plainly a little leg weary from his long "wait in front," still was going gallantly. He had the rail, an advantage, for the going was firmer there than nearer the middle of the track. But, turning into the stretch, San Jacinto, because of his huge stride, went a bit wide. The boy on Arabian saw his chance. He "went to the bat," plying his whip mercilessly on Arabian's flanks to carry the horse through the opening on the rail. San Jacinto lost his lead by his wide swing. Arabian, by making a close turn, saved the ground. The two horses started down the long stretch, with Arabian a length in front. The black boy on San Jacinto let out his final link. The old horse responded, bounding alongside Arabian.

The boy on Arabian, seeing the dangerous horse again alongside, now made the mistake of his riding career. He pulled his whip and struck the black jockey on San Jacinto with all his might across the face. Then he plied his whip across San Jacinto's head. His idea probably was to make San Jacinto bolt across the track, and thereby lose many lengths. It was rankly foul work. The jockey, blinded by the flying mud, perhaps thought that the heavy rain still was falling and that his foul jockeyship therefore would not be seen.

San Jacinto did bolt, clear to the outside of the track. He lost five lengths in doing that. But Morrison could see the old horse gather himself together in one of his old rages after having very naturally lost his temper under the outrage of the Arabian jockey's whip across his eyes. Under the little negro's guidance he swung back to the field

with his prodigious strides, quickly recovered, and, now hemmed in by the other horses, shot out to wear the favorite down. His nose was at the tiring Arabian flank in the last sixteenth. The favorite, game, was "cooked to a turn." San Jacinto crept up. He got his old head to the favorite's saddle girth. The boy on the favorite was punching the horse cruelly with whip and spur. Arabian responded with all he had left. But San Jacinto, with tremendous leaps, ranged alongside. He was almost on even terms with the favorite, and Arabian was quitting. But the ground lost by the wide swing, and after that the bolt across the track under the foul-riding jockey's lash, had been too great for anything on hoofs to make up. Even so, the horse's heads came down together on the wire, Arabian's muzzle perhaps two inches in front. One jump past the wire, and San Jacinto was in the lead.

"Foul! A dirty foul!" the maddened backers of San Jacinto howled.

Morrison, stunned and worn out, turned away from the track and walked slowly back into the betting ring. It had cut him to the quick to see the old horse beaten after such a magnificent race. But Arabian's winning number was displayed!

Morrison had seen the foul, but he had little hope that the judges would allow it. He had seen a lot of unreprimanded foul riding at Benning. He strolled dully to the back of the ring and stood in a corner by himself, his mind a blank.

That was why he did not see the patrol judge and the two jockeys mount the judges' stand. The little negro rider of San Jacinto showed the stewards a great welt across his chocolate cheek, from which the blood still was flowing. The judges looked at a number of still-rising welts across San Jacinto's nose. The presiding judge made a signal to the man at the board across the track.

"Arabian's number's down—he's disqualified! San Jacinto gets it!" Morrison heard the great shout in the betting ring.

IV.

Morrison, less than twenty-four hours after he had ordered steamed oysters and sherry, without, as it appeared, having any possible chance to pay for them, strolled into the paddock with ten thousand two hundred and fifty dollars in the main package and some odd, loose bills in another pocket. The money he had got by way of winnings from the bookmakers was not as fresh and brittle as the crisp notes he had handed to them. But it would serve!

He helped Scrubby with the job of cooling out San Jacinto. They loitered around the stables for some hours. It was dark when they went for dinner to an old-fashioned road house across the way from the track. Here they spent two more hours.

"I made up my mind this afternoon to do two things," said Morrison to his old friend over the cigars. "For one thing, I'm through with the horses. They'll never make a tramp of me again. I've had enough."

"Now you said something," was Scrubby's emphatic comment. "It's a rotten game. The ponies have kep' me a bum most of my life. Why don't you go into some little business, now that you're fixed?"

"That's me," said Morrison. "But I've got something else to do first. I'm going to take another look around for the girl, Scrubby. If I find her, maybe she'll come back. I'd treat her square if she would. You know that. I want her. Fact is, there ain't much in life that I do want, outside of her."

Scrubby blew a thick cloud of smoke

upward through his wispy, walrus mustache.

"Yep, I reckon you'd behave if you had her now, Ed," he said dryly. "You sure were some bad actor when you did have her. But you've had your lickin' since she went away. I'd like to see you and Alice together ag'in."

He looked at his watch. It was a quarter to nine. "Let's drop over to the shed and see how the old hawss is makin' out," he said.

Again, as on the night before, when they entered the stable with the lantern, they found old San Jacinto blinking in half a doze, dreaming dreams, mayhap, of victories past and yet to come. But he roused, and his ears shot forward, when Morrison again stood before him. Morrison had brought some lumps of sugar from the road-house table for the horse. He offered them to San Jacinto. But the horse, nickering excitedly, refused them, and muzzled the other pocket of the fur-lined coat. The shawl still was in that pocket. Morrison had forgot to replace it in the suit case on the night before. He pulled it out and pressed it against the old horse's nostrils. San Jacinto, whinnying, tried to bury his whole head in it.

"Say, Ed, look-a-here," he heard Scrubby's quiet voice behind him.

He turned. A woman in a raincoat was standing beside Scrubby. The little old foreman raised the lantern so that its light shone full in her face. Her moist eyes were fixed upon the shawl in Morrison's hand. Then she raised them to his face.

"Hello, you old badling," she said to him. There was a little falling clutch in her voice. But it was the old voice of affection, with very, very little reproach in the tone. Morrison, stupefied, unbelieving, entranced, sure that he was mad, passed the shawl in front of his eyes, as if to clear this wild dream from them.

"Nope, you ain't dreamin', Ed," he heard Scrubby say. "It's her."

Morrison leaped to her. He made uncouth, blubbering, incoherent noises, no one word intelligible, as he crushed her to him, held her out before him to devour her with his eyes, crushed her again. She kept dabbing at his streaming eyes and her own with her little wad of handkerchief.

"Here, you people take this lantern," said Scrubby, brushing at his eyes with his sleeve. "This ain't no place for a minister's son," and he disappeared in the darkness.

San Jacinto was going insane in his stall. Morrison's wife released herself from his embrace, and, running over to the old horse, rubbed his twitching nose and lips with both her hands, prattling the old baby talk to him. San Jacinto nuzzled her neck, her arms, her bosom, breathing deeply of her, whinnying hysterically—the old years back for him, too!

"But how are you here?" Morrison, still fearing that it was all a mocking dream, asked her.

"It was Scrubby brought me," she said. "I've got a nice little millinery shop in Baltimore. Scrubby found out last year where I was. This morning, early, he called me up on the long-distance phone. He told me that you were in Washington—and San Jacinto—and he told me about you and the old horse and the shawl last night—and I——"

That was as far as she could go.

"And which did you come to see—San Jacinto, or me?" Morrison, holding her pretty close again, asked her.

"Both—you know how much I always loved you both, badling!" she managed to say.

One forenoon, a fortnight later, Morrison was walking slowly along

Charles Street in Baltimore. The Pimlico races were in progress, but he was not attending them. He was looking around for a proper location for an up-to-the-minute cigar store. That was his business this morning, as it had been for several days.

Suddenly a big man in a shaggy ulster stood in front of him, blocking his path. The big man was gazing intently at the seal collar of the fur-lined coat Morrison was wearing. There was a grin on his face. Morrison, after a moment of casting back, suddenly remembered the man's face. He was the better boxer of the two men who had got into the fight in the Washington restaurant on the night when the tide had turned for Morrison.

"I'd know it among a million, pal," said the big man, pointing to a small spot, a singe made by a dropped cigar in the fur of the coat's collar. "I reckon I'll have to trouble you for my benny, old man," he added good-naturedly.

"I reckon it's yours, all right," said Morrison; and he took the coat off. "Maybe you haven't heard how I got it."

"Yes, I have," said the big man. "After I got turned loose after being pinched that night, and went back to the restaurant for the coat, the waiter owned up to me how he'd tossed the first coat he came to on the rack at you after running you out of the place. So that part of it's all right. And I don't blame you for not returning to the restaurant, after being hustled out that way, when you hadn't started any trouble."

Morrison waited. He knew that something else would be coming. He stood ready and willing to pay up. He had the money, and there would be plenty left to start the cigar store.

"Of course you found the 'leather' in the breast pocket," said the big man.

"Yes, I found it—and what was in it," promptly replied Morrison.

The big man peered into his face.

"Did you do any good with the money, pal?" he asked interestedly.

"It pulled me out of the deepest hole I was ever in, and put me on my feet," said Morrison.

"Good! I'm mighty glad to hear it!" exclaimed the big man. "Well, you look like a pretty good guy. That's what I take you to be. And so I'll just tell you something. That little package you found in the wallet was the queer."

"The queer!" Morrison gasped.

"Yep—bogus money, but the best stuff of the kind ever turned out," said the big man, with a wide, affable grin. "I got it down in New Orleans, and brought that bunch of it you found to Washington to turn it loose on the Benning bookmakers. But you beat me to it. I hope you gave 'em a good trimming. Don't look worried, bo. You didn't know you were shoving the queer, and so you don't have to feel guilty. And there'll be no come-back about it. The secret-service men got on to the fact that the hundred-dollar Williams were in circulation in Washington, but they got no clew as to where the stuff came from, and they never will. So you're all right. Glad you stung the books. So long!" And the big man swung down Charles Street.

Morrison told his wife about it that afternoon. They were at their pretty home near Druid Hill Park. She had sold the millinery shop.

"Well," she said reflectively, a finger at her lip, "you didn't know it, and so you can't be blamed at all. And if it hadn't been for the coat and the wallet and your going to the hotel and meeting Scrubby, and everything, why, maybe we'd never have seen each other again!" She paused contemplatively, looking out of the window, and added: "I don't like crooked things or crooked people, Ed—but I do hope and pray that the man who made that counterfeit money never will be caught!"

The Two Terwilligers

By Wilbur Hall

Author of "The Smell of Gasoline," "For Charity," Etc.

Sailing under false colors on the ocean is not so dangerous as living under a false name on land, especially if the name you have appropriated happens to belong to a man who is liable to turn up at any moment

JAMES CHISHOLM, employed in the diamond department at Block & Co.'s under the stolen name of Amos Terwilliger, sat at his accustomed table in the little café in Los Angeles he had patronized every evening for three years, and stared at the afternoon paper propped up before him —his dinner forgotten. It was a brief item in the "News of the City" column that had caught his eye—merely this:

Amos Terwilliger, a retired diamond expert, of New York City, and his uncle, J. B. A. Morterson, both now residents of Pasig, Philippine Islands, are at the Mosslyn Hotel, en route for Italy and Switzerland.

Strangely enough, Chisholm's first feeling was one of relief. The man whose name he had appropriated, because of its high rating in the profession, had come back from the obscurity of great distance, and it seemed unthinkable to Chisholm that the real Terwilliger's presence would not unmask him. For the three years of his employment in the Block establishment he had lived day and night with dread of exposure; now that it appeared imminent he thought for the moment that he would welcome it.

But as he recalled the years during which he had struggled to gain a foothold—during which, in fact, he had fought desperately for very existence—there came a violent reaction. The cruelty and injustice of his fate struck him like a blow in the face. He and Terwilliger had been employed together by the Reynolds Company in New York —only they had had access to the firm's private diamond vault, from which there had disappeared a wallet containing a valuable series of gems. On that particular day from which all his misfortunes dated Chisholm had been alone. Some time before he had foolishly told one of the junior partners and his associate, Amos Terwilliger, of worries over money matters—of his wife's extravagance—of the approach of the time when a note would come due. There was no evidence, but the gems were gone! Searches—first casual, then painstakingly thorough, then frantic—desperate—had proved that. Chisholm's innocence had been obscured by the shadow of circumstantial proof; he had been miserably conscious that he looked a guilty man. To save being discharged he had resigned, and walked from the store stripped of his one asset —an unimpeachable character.

At forty a man does not learn easily how to make a living. Odd jobs had tided him over for a time; then had come worry and discouragement, blind anger at his fate, an avalanche of old bills, his wife's sudden departure after a horrible scene, finally real poverty and ill health. Fleeing from one city to another, always hoping to escape from his own wretched thoughts and recol-

lections, and to find new ground on which to build, he had become desperate. In a middle Western city he put on a bold front and applied for a humble clerkship in a jewelry house—only to be confronted with the inevitable demand for a bond and references. It was useless for him to apply to a surety company. The shadow was still over him. So he turned to go.

It was then that he had stumbled on an old acquaintance and been told that Amos Terwilliger had gone to the Orient to join a wealthy uncle. Batcheller said laughingly: "Yes, he's gone for good, and he might as well be dead. They don't come back from those countries, you know."

The remark had stuck in Chisholm's mind, and finally he had answered an advertisement in Los Angeles, using the name of Amos Terwilliger. His letter was replied to promptly, and he was invited to call. By pawning a watch—his one valuable possession—he had been able to dress himself with a certain cheap neatness and make personal application. In the end his bond came, and he was restored to a semblance of his old posifion.

At first the ease with which he had consummated the fraud had given Chisholm a false feeling of security. One day, however, a woman whom he had served at Reynolds' consulted him in regard to matching a stone for an ear stud. She had not recognized him, but the incident had awakened a thousand fears. For three years thereafter he had been ridden by apprehension. One word would ruin him. His record for efficiency and honesty could be wiped out with a breath. He had secured a position and a bond under a false name—Chisholm knew what that would mean if it were discovered.

And now he sat staring at a newspaper that shouted to him from a three-line item that the real Amos Terwilliger was in the city. There were innumerable contingencies that were possible, whether Terwilliger remained a day or a week. Any one of them would expose the fraud, and James Chisholm would be turned into the gutter again. All his life he had lived honestly and dealt fairly—his one offense had been, at worst, a venal sin—appropriating a name no better than his own to escape from a stigma wrongfully attaching to his. Who was Amos Terwilliger that he should go scot-free? There had been two trusted men—the diamonds had disappeared—James Chisholm was innocent! One name was left untarnished of the two—he had needed it desperately and had taken it.

He could justify himself in that well enough. Now ill luck—a cruel and monstrous Nemesis—was close behind again. He had done all he could. Society had marked him, played him one scruvy trick after another; this time he would take up the challenge and make reprisal. It was himself against the world; he would square the account.

Most of the night he walked the streets, shaping a plan. In the morning, after packing a light trunk, he shaved and dressed—going over the details, checking them up, insuring himself against any flaw in the structure. Before the store opened he engaged passage for an invalid father on a tramp freighter, bound from the harbor at three o'clock for the Marquesas Islands. A taxicab driver undertook to carry the mythical parent to the wharves and see him safely aboard. It was ridiculously simple.

The junior partner at Block & Co.'s promptly promised to arrange a leave of absence for the salesman when Chisholm requested it. He explained that pressing personal business summoned him to San Francisco, and Mr. Glass suggested that he take an extra day.

"There are two small matters that you can attend to for the firm, Terwilliger,"

he said. "Your call north comes at an opportune minute."

Chisholm accepted the commissions. He was to leave the store at noon. The preliminary arrangements went ahead without a hitch. The man Block & Co. knew as Amos Terwilliger entered the diamond vaults as usual to get out his stock for the day. While there he took from a wallet a sealed paper containing eighty carats of matched blue-white gems, wrapped it in a silk handkerchief, and put it in his hip pocket, placed again in the leather case an exact duplicate of the stolen package, even to the annotations showing the weight of the contents, the number of stones, and their quality. The paper in his pocket inclosed a modest fortune—the substitute was wrapped about a dozen pebbles.

He was surprised at his own calmness as he returned to the diamond counter with the usual stock in its trays. The danger of discovery was very slight. Until the nightly inventory it was not probable that his spurious package would be touched. Skillfully as he had prepared it, there was small chance that it would be examined. Several days—perhaps a week—might elapse before the paper was opened. By that time he would be out on the open sea, beyond all reach of——

Of punishment! Of charges of robbery! Of conviction as a common, low thief! He would be safe from arrest, but never again free from the knowledge that he was that thing he had all his life despised, that never in his life he had found himself able to pity—a thief! Escaped from the clutches of the law, but living from that minute with himself—an embezzler! His head pounded with the reiteration of the truth.

An appointment which he had made but forgotten was kept to the minute by a valued customer, but Block & Co.'s deft and courteous diamond salesman, Amos Terwilliger, had been replaced by a clumsy, absent-minded stranger in Terwilliger's form. The customer tried to conceal her impatience, but shortly she looked at him through her glass. "I can't seem to make you understand what I want this morning, Mr. Terwilliger," she said sharply. "Pardon me, but I have said twice now that I do not care for platinum and that these stones do not appear to me to be matched at all."

The salesman wiped his forehead abstractedly. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Clark. I'm—in difficulty. Will you excuse me for a moment? I'm not myself."

The woman nodded. "I don't mean to be harsh, Mr. Terwilliger," she said. Then she laughed a little. "You must admit that your unimpeachable reputation as a diamond expert has suffered with me this morning."

He rose and tried to smile. "You're quite right. In just a minute, if you please——"

He went hurriedly to the rear of the store, swung open the great steel doors of the vault, entered, unlocked the diamond safe, took out his spurious package, returned the diamonds, closed the safe door, and walked back into the store, his limbs trembling. Halfway to the little diamond salesroom he stopped, faint and sick, and leaned for a moment against a case.

"Thank God!" he whispered. "Oh, thank God!"

Then he continued on his way to the salesroom and his waiting customer. With something of his old manner he satisfied her inquiries and received her order. When she was gone he went to the counter to answer the embarrassed, ignorant questions of a boy who wanted a small diamond engagement ring. The clerk found surprising relief in the trivial bargaining. He put the youth at ease—listened with real interest to his story—made a suggestion.

"Yes, that's it," the young man said. "That'll tickle Millie."

The salesman looked up. Across the store, engaged in an examination of a watch offered him by Mr. Glass, the junior partner, was the real Amos Terwilliger. The man who, for three years, had used that name appraised him without a start. He had been so sure that this would happen——

The boy, comparing rings in the trays before him, asked a question.

The clerk shook his head. "No, I should say that if you are going to select a small stone the higher setting would be better. It shows off the diamond to more advantage. See!" Long habit dominated him, even though his mind was jumping to the opposite side of the store, and though somewhere in him he was saying again: "Thank God! Oh, thank God!"

Then he was aware that the real Amos Terwilliger had turned to flash a quick look across at him. The pretender saw his old associate engage in a tense conversation—the junior partner nodding, interrogating—the watches lying between them on the counter, forgotten. The false Terwilliger went through the motions of concluding his sale, surprised at his own outward calmness. He wrote out the necessary order for the workroom, sent to the cashier's cage the money offered in payment, handed the customer his change, thanked him, wishing him well, bowed him out. The seconds dragged. Before many of them had passed he himself would be walking out of the store for the last time—discharged, disgraced, if not actually in the custody of a detective on the way to prison, for impersonating another man, for forgery —for——

"But not for thieving!" he whispered to himself exultingly. "Not for that!"

When the real Amos Terwilliger and the young partner walked across to where he stood he waited them calmly. Terwilliger spoke first.

"Chisholm," he said brusquely, "can you explain your use of my name?"

The pretender bowed. "Yes," he said; "I'm glad the time has come to do it."

Terwilliger softened. "Look here, old man, I don't want you to think I'm judging you without a hearing. I'm trying not to do that. It doesn't seem possible, though—for you. Was it—have things been going badly? I'm sorry."

The false Terwilliger grasped the edge of the counter and gripped down hard. He had not expected this. But he spoke quietly. "It began with the theft of those diamonds from Reynolds & Brother, Mr. Terwilliger."

The other corrected him, barking his interruption. "Amos—Amos, old fellow," he said, clearing his throat with embarrassment, "I don't go back on my friends in times of trouble—times like these!"

"Thanks, Amos. It began with the theft of those stones. You remember about it. I left Reynolds. My wife went away. My friends gradually fell off from me. I don't blame them, God knows! I couldn't find work, and I was taken sick. I knew nothing but selling diamonds, Amos, you understand."

"But," Terwilliger broke in explosively; "but good Lord, what has that to do——"

"The bonding companies," the other answered. "In Kansas City I had a good position almost secured. I had forgotten about a bond. When they asked me for that I knew—I didn't even apply."

The young partner, Glass, was looking from one to the other of the men. Now he spoke. "When you came here, then, Mr.—Mr.——"

"James Chisholm," the pretender said.

"When you came here, Mr. Chisholm,

you knew that Mr. Terwilliger had left the country, probably to remain?"

"That's what Batcheller told me in Kansas City. You remember Batcheller, Amos?"

"Yes."

Glass was frowning. "You used the name—Mr. Terwilliger's name—to get this position with us—to get your bond?"

"That was it. I've tried to serve you well. I hope I've been honest by you in everything else, Mr. Glass. Now whatever you want to do with me——"

Terwilliger was gazing stupidly at the man who, for three years, had masqueraded under his name. "But, Jim Chisholm," he cried abruptly, "do you mean you didn't know—— Didn't you even apply for a bond?"

Chisholm shook his head.

"And so the bond people couldn't reach you; every one lost track of you? Why, it's awful!" Terwilliger wiped his forehead excitedly. "Listen, old Jim Chisholm—those diamonds were found that time. Yes, sir, found in Geoffrey Reynolds' private safe!"

AGE HAS NO TERRORS

ALVEY AUGUSTUS ADEE, who was born as recently as November 27, 1842, is assistant secretary of state for this country, and enjoys a big reputation as a real diplomat. Also he is famous as the champion cross-country bicyclist of the United States. Now, however, he has taken up a new line of sport.

When his day's work is done, and he has made all the diplomats in the world look like thirty cents, he leaps out of his office, rushes down to the Potomac River, bounds into a canoe, and beats it up the river.

The only sign of age he has is a slight deafness.

When he first took up canoeing, Stuart Godwin remarked in a Washington hotel one evening:

"I saw Mr. Adee paddling a canoe up the river this afternoon."

"How do you know it was Adee?" somebody inquired.

"Because," was the explanation, "I shouted to him that Germany had declared war on us, and he didn't answer."

THE TWO MORGANS

YOUNG MORGAN and the Elder Morgan is the way in which they refer to them in Wall Street nowadays. And a great deal of speculation is being indulged in in contrasting the methods and abilities of the son with those of his father.

The Elder Morgan was the greatest spender that the world has ever seen. He absolutely ignored values. He never counted the cost of anything that he wished to possess. In Rome, one day, twelve china plates were shown to him. They probably were not worth more than one hundred dollars apiece, but the owners asked eighteen hundred dollars each for them. But they pleased Morgan's fancy, and he bought them. He made it his life's rule never to bargain. He either accepted an offer or refused it.

Recently Young Morgan sold out his father's art collections to dealers at prices that represented only a small part of what his father had paid for them, and Wall Street exhausted itself in speculating on the reason for this action. It has now reached the conclusion that Young Morgan has a better sense of values than his father.

Homeward Bound

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Wall Between," "Jane Hardy, Shipmaster," Etc.

(A Four-Part Serial—Part Four)

CHAPTER XVI.—*(Continued).*

THE publication of the news that Edward Barrington was dead so distressed Harriet Page that she went to Susan's house as fast as a horse and buggy could take her.

"I suppose you've seen or heard of it," she exclaimed, displaying a copy of the *Gazette*. "Inasmuch as you never told a living soul except Miss Corbin and Mr. Bayne and me, I came straight down to answer for myself."

"There is no need of that," wearily replied Susan. "The telephone has been ringing for the last hour. It seems as if every woman in town had called me up. I can't make them understand. The local correspondent of the Boston *Globe* has interviewed me already, and there was nothing for me to do but confirm the report of Edward's death."

Stella swept into the room, wrathfully snatched the *Gazette,* crumpled, and flung it aside.

"There is malice in every line of it,"' she cried. "Poor Mr. Bayne, it is all to hamper him and drive him out of town. And he was making headway against all the suspicion and indifference. Now the people will think he has purposely deceived them when he was really trying to help Eppingham and honor Edward Barrington. I feel sorry and hurt and disappointed. Why can't we three go away together for a few weeks? You ought to have a change, Susan, and the village will drive you distracted. And you need Harriet, who is always cheerful, no matter what happens. Not an expensive tour, but some nice, quiet place in the mountains."

"It would be the best thing in the world for Susan," declared Harriet, "and if we're real careful we won't have to live beyond our means."

"I shall be glad and thankful to go," said Susan. "To the mountains, Stella. I can't bear to look at the sea."

Edward Barrington arrived in Eppingham at noon, at which hour the population, as one man, had gone home to dinner. His mother was not at the train to meet him, and, while he anxiously lingered, the station agent rushed up to shake hands and congratulate him on the fact that he was not as dead as reported.

" 'Twould have jolted me something awful, Ed, to bump into you without any warning whatsomever, but your message to Susan prepared me."

"Did it reach her? I received no reply. Is anything the matter?"

"She's away from home. Her and Harriet Page went for a vacation to the mountains a spell ago. I forwarded your telegram to the place where they were stopping at last accounts, but it was undelivered. They hadn't left no address behind them. Say, Ed, you're

This story began in the POPULAR MAGAZINE dated October 7th. Back numbers may be ordered at news stands.

looking thin as a rail. Of course I read your message when I took it off the wire, but I haven't said nothing to nobody. I nearly busted holding it in, but it was too big a surprise party to spoil. Got saved from the *Henrietta* and carried clear to South America? It must have been a trying experience."

"It was. How is the old town? As dull as usual?"

"There was some excitement over you, Ed. A friend of yours by the name of Bayne stirred it up. He is over at the Eagle Hotel, and I guess he'll be tickled to see you."

"Bayne?" shouted Barrington. "Second officer of the *Columbian?*"

"He looks it, Ed. A schooner of his came up the river yesterday, as handsome a craft as ever you laid eyes on."

Striding across the street, Barrington bolted into the hotel, and discovered his elderly shipmate in the dining room. The meeting was tumultuous. Mr. Bayne upset his chair and took the tablecloth with him. There were tears in his honest eyes as he struggled clear of the wreckage and thumped the returned castaway with tremendous gusto. He was not troubled by fear of phantoms. It was astounding, but not miraculous. They were compelled to wait while the natives crowded around to assail Barrington with breathless questions. In their manner was a hint of timidity, of a friendliness flavored with caution. These worthy citizens were of the opinion that Eppingham might find the young man very much alive.

Mr. Bayne also had reasons to be circumspect and cautious. As rapidly as his mental habit would permit, he was adjusting himself to the situation. He had been so strictly bound to secrecy concerning the intervention of Stella Corbin that in honor he could not disclose it to Barrington. This was a matter, delicate and complicated, for the girl herself to handle. It should not come from him, as a man in her employ, and it was his duty to shield her as zealously as possible. As soon as they were alone, Barrington made haste to ask him:

"Do you know where my mother is? You know her, of course."

"I found a letter when I returned to town yesterday," said Mr. Bayne, omitting the information that Stella had written it. "Mrs. Barrington has been at a small hotel in the Dixville Notch, and was about to leave for home. She planned to break the journey at Mount Washington and make a leisurely cruise of it. She ought to fetch Eppingham by the end of the week. I am afraid you can't reach her by wire."

"She must have needed to get away, poor woman," replied the son, "with a whole summer of worrying about me. Still living with Harriet Page, is she?"

"No, she rented a house down the river, the Slocum homestead, to make a home for you, Mr. Barrington."

"Well, I have been trying to get home for some time, but my yarn can wait. I was banged over the head and went queer for a while, so queer, Mr. Bayne, that I had to lay over and square accounts with Captain McCready Pope. You will be pleased to hear that Handsome Mac is on the beach, a total wreck and no insurance."

"And you put him there? Thank God for that!" devoutly ejaculated the other. "If you were able to bilge him, you can make this town eat out of your hand."

"I deserve no credit," laughed Barrington. "My ghost paid him a visit off Temple Rock. Now please unwind your own skein and let me off until to-night. You are the puzzle. What's this about a bully fine schooner in the river?"

Mr. Bayne rubbed his thinning thatch, and proceeded to narrate, carefully choosing his words:

"You talked to me some, when we

were at sea together, about this town and river of yours. The company had no more use for me as an officer, and maybe you know what it is to pound the New York pavements. My age was against me. Fifty years is the dead line. I was lucky enough to interest some capital, and I came to Eppingham to look it over as one of the old-time coastwise ports. I had faith, the same as you did, that the small-schooner trade wasn't played out."

"And did you know that I was reported lost, Mr. Bayne?"

"Your mother told me. I was pretty well bowled over. She had her reasons for saying nothing about it to the village."

"I can understand that. She was hanging on, and my coming back in the *Henrietta* was bound to make unpleasant talk. And so you decided to invest some money here?"

"Yes, after investigating the trade. It impressed me as safe and sound, and I am old enough to be conservative."

"I am glad you had the courage to tackle it, for I had the same idea," generously exclaimed Barrington.

"I took the liberty of using your name," was the confession, "as a friend of yours, you understand. I had a notion of calling my business the Barrington Packet Company, partly for remembrance, and it might please your mother."

"What a brick you are, Mr. Bayne! And have things gone right for you? What about the schooner in the river?"

"I'm not sure I can use her out of Eppingham, Mr. Barrington. I went ahead and bought her—a great bargain, built for interisland trade in the West Indies and only four years old. As fast as a yacht, lots of cargo space, and already equipped with engine power."

"But what under the sun is there to prevent you from going ahead?"

"I can't secure wharfage and warehouse room," was the reply. "The town has barred me out."

"What's that?" sharply exclaimed Barrington. "And you came here as a friend of mine, with a scheme that I am absolutely certain will succeed and do the town and county more good than anything that has happened here in years? Barred out? Who did it?"

It was Barrington revivified that spoke. The challenge to action, the trumpet call of friendship, banished his physical weakness and sense of futility. Mr. Bayne eyed him with affectionate admiration, and was reminded of the night when they had taken off the passengers of the *Columbian*.

"The spirit is willing, I see," he commented, nodding his approval, "but you don't look strong enough to stand rough weather."

"What I need is something to do," Barrington assured him. "I have been fretting about myself for weeks and weeks. Now please don't think I am looking for a job with you, Mr. Bayne. This is no question of wages, and so on. What I want to know is why you can't do business in my town."

"And you are anxious to pitch in and help me in a proposition that was your own in the first place? Why, it must look to you, now that you have come back, as though I had used your name to cut the ground from under your feet, Mr. Barrington."

"Don't spoil my temper," the young man warned him. "I was rated as a lively chief officer when we sailed together."

"I remember that you were my superior officer, sir," respectfully returned Mr. Bayne, wishing that Miss Stella Corbin might overhear this singular interview.

"Call it a shipmate. Isn't that excuse enough for me to stand by and help you?" was the earnest exclamation.

"And snarl yourself up in my trou-

bles? You are no fair-weather friend, Mr. Barrington. Will you come aboard the schooner and look her over?"

"Not until I know why you can't get all the wharfage you want. It sounds like a bad joke."

"There is Leander Nickerson for one," said Mr. Bayne, checking them off on his fingers, "and John Markle, and the railroad, and the Eppingham *Gazette*."

"One at a time, please," cheerfully observed Barrington. "Leander Nickerson? That shrimp? What do you say to a chat with him right away?"

"It needs a man like you. A stranger doesn't know the marks and courses," was the grateful reply. "But please think it over before you try to pass me a towline. If you propose to stay here you can't afford to set the town against you."

"You don't honestly mean that," reproved Barrington. "You are not the kind to trim sail or steer against your convictions. You wish to save me from unpopularity? Let me tell you one thing more. I am alive and sane and home again because of the friends that were good to me. I had never believed that the world could be so kind. This is my first chance to pass it along. So let's have no more argument."

They walked from the hotel down the main street, which had witnessed nothing so eventful as the return of Edward Barrington since the circus parade. A trail of small boys followed in his wake, gathering every precious word that fell from his lips. A man who had sailed on the last voyage of Captain Moses Carpenter and whose obituary had been printed in the *Gazette* was more than fascinating. He was uncanny. Their elders, of a more dignified bearing, were conscious of similar emotions, and hastened to express their most cordial esteem. They really meant it. There was no denying the fact that very hard things had been said against Mr. Bayne, and that he had been regarded as some sort of an impostor. This was now disproved, and the critics were confounded.

There was no mention of Stella Corbin and her long visit. The common inclination was to avoid her as a measure of prudence. If Barrington should get wind of the ill-natured and even scandalous rumors which had been set afloat he would be quick to inflict summary punishment, and for once the active tongue of the postmaster's wife was stilled. In halting to greet one old acquaintance after another, he made it plain that Mr. Bayne had been fully justified in using his name, and that he proposed to work for him against the discreditable opposition.

In the offing, at a turn of the street, they chanced to descry none other than Leander Nickerson, who, hunting a hole, popped into the nearest doorway. Barrington plucked him forth by the collar, no great feat of strength, and grimly marched him in the direction of the river, seeking a convenient lane, where the spectators were few. Mr. Bayne, quietly chuckling, grasped the other arm, and the mariners twain appeared to be a sociable escort for the attorney at law, who was so bewildered that he neither struggled nor yelped for succor.

"This is assault and battery," he lamented.

"What you need is a writ of habeas corpus," said Barrington.

"Shall we drown him?" mildly inquired Mr. Bayne.

"Not until the tide is right. I shall want to have a talk with him aboard your schooner. We might be interrupted in his office. Your mistake was to approach him as one gentleman to another. Leander requires discipline. I went to school with him, and he wasn't licked half enough because he generally managed to lie out of it."

Nearing the wharves, the party made

more rapid progress, and the lawyer's reluctant patent-leather toes were furrowing the dust as he protested:

"You will be arrested for this as soon as I can have a warrant issued. I guess you'll sing a different tune in court."

"After you, Leander," courteously retorted Barrington. "It is your turn first. The county chairman, are you? And an old playmate of mine."

Leander subsided, and shot a shrewd glance at Mr. Bayne. So this was to be a game of swapping favors. Ed Barrington was a tough customer, but it might be possible to trick him and so gain time for a conference with John Markle.

"How could we help losing confidence in Mr. Bayne," he whined, "when your own mother acknowledged, Ed, that you had been lost with old Moses Carpenter?"

"It is not lack of confidence, but lack of common decency that ails you," Barrington crisply informed him, and the convoy halted on a wharf while Mr. Bayne shouted to the schooner to send off a boat. The lawyer had visions of being kidnaped and carried to sea in this low, rakish vessel, and it was uncomfortably doubtful whether his fellow citizens would mourn his loss. His captors were not pirates, however, and he was presently ushered into a large cabin which was almost luxurious. He was visibly impressed. As he said to himself, the firm of Barrington & Bayne was in a position to deliver the goods. And he foresaw a sweeping change of opinion in the community. This might be the proper moment for him to shift to the winning side. Affably he remarked:

"We all make mistakes in judgment, gentlemen. I am open to argument."

Barrington winked at Mr. Bayne, and pleasantly replied:

"I used to hate you, Leander, but no more of that. I like some people less than others. You have crossed the hawse of a friend of mine, and that means war. You have done a lot of dirty political work in this county, and I intend to find out more about it. This will have to wait until I am more familiar with my own community."

"Why don't you run for the legislature, Ed, if you have come home to stay?" amiably suggested Leander. "Everybody is talking about you. Strike while the iron is hot. I might make a dicker with you."

"And ride on my back," laughed Barrington. "You always were afraid of me, even in school. I should have paid very little attention to you at present, if you had left Mr. Bayne alone. But this means a show-down. You will write a statement, to appear in the *Gazette*, apologizing for slandering this friend of mine, and withdrawing your opposition to his plans. And at the same time you will inform the railroad that it must hire somebody else to pull its chestnuts out of the fire."

"But that's impossible, Ed, with the fall campaign coming on. This would kill me deader'n a doornail. I might as well leave town."

"There are healthier climates for you, Leander. I haven't threatened you. I am simply giving you an order."

"What if I don't? You can't make me. This is no ship on the high seas, where an officer is a slave driver. You appear to forget you're in Eppingham, where there are laws to protect the rights of the humblest citizen."

"Laws? Do you know the laws?" And Barrington was dangerously quiet. "During that last voyage with old Captain Carpenter he told me about a case you had handled for him. He once owned the lower wharf and the coal sheds, remember? There was a flaw in his title, or so it was claimed, and suit was brought against him. He was unable to lay hands on one or two old documents at the time. As his counsel,

you looked through his papers in a tin box which he kept in his cabin, and you said the deeds were not there. He lost the suit, Leander, and John Markle got possession of the property. You didn't sell yourself to Markle, did you, and betray Moses Carpenter? He is dead, and you thought that ended it. No one had tried to uncover your tracks, even to search the county records to make certain that there was anything wrong with the title in the first place. What if John Markle saw an opportunity to cheat the old man out of a few hundred dollars, and cooked it up with you? They put naughty little lawyers away for things like that, Leander, where they are on the inside looking out."

This speech caused Mr. Nickerson to assume an attitude of absorbed cogitation. His hope of swapping favors had vanished. A rat in a trap is in no situation to discuss terms. Nothing was to be gained by discussing Captain Moses Carpenter, who had been so unexpectedly summoned from the deep.

"I'll think it over, Ed," said Leander, his accents dispirited.

"Think quick," advised Barrington. "I shall be waiting to read your statement in this week's *Gazette*. You may as well put him ashore, Mr. Bayne. By the way, is John Markle in town?"

"He drove to Greenville this morning to look at some horses," answered Leander, with an unfeeling grin. "Does he get his medicine next?"

"The deck appears to be cleared for him," remarked Mr. Bayne. "I should call you disposed of."

Mr. Nickerson, having been dumped upon the nearest wharf, the shipmates lingered on board the schooner. Barrington enthusiastically admired her, offering the suggestion:

"The *Fleetwing* is a handsome name, but why don't you call her the *Henrietta?* I should like to have Captain Carpenter remembered. God never made a finer man and truer friend."

"Thank you, I will, Mr. Barrington. And so they stole his wharf from him. You hit the lawyer between wind and water."

"It was a random shot," mirthfully confessed Edward. "All that Moses Carpenter ever told me was that he had hired Leander, as the only lawyer in town, to defend the suit. The old gentleman was so honest himself that he mistrusted nobody. I invented the rest of it, and it happened to be true, or near enough to hit the mark. Do I qualify as a seagoing diplomat? You have to fight the devil with fire."

"If you are interested in throwing the harpoon into John Markle as the next victim," said Mr. Bayne, "I am told that those Hungarians still rent that house of his on the Greenville road and sell bad rum. When you led the raid some time ago, during one of your visits home, they were let off with fines and suspended sentences. Markle and Leander Nickerson used their influence with the court. The place was run pretty cautiously until you were reported missing. Since then it has been wide open except to the decent men who have tried to get evidence against it."

"John Markle knows all about it, and he doesn't care," burst out Barrington. "Are the village boys going out there?"

"Fellows of eighteen or twenty, and the town drunkards, and the models of propriety who dare not keep a bottle at home. I have seen several of them staggering back in the evening. As a stranger, I could figure out no way to interfere."

"Those are the boys I hoped to make good Yankee sailors of," said Edward. "Their fathers value them only for the work they can get out of them. They have no club, nowhere to go in the evening except to this Hungarian booze kennel, where they drink and play poker

for the excitement of it. Lord, I never envied the rich, but there are a few things I should like to do. What do you say, Mr. Bayne, to a stroll out the Greenville road after dark? Shall we take a look?"

"You ought to go to bed and sleep," chided the other. "Are you trying to wear yourself out on the first day at home? Here is a quiet, snug retreat aboard this schooner. Let me have your traps fetched down from the hotel."

"Please remember how much time I have lost on the homeward voyage by way of Montevideo," objected Barrington. "I promise to use no violence. We can't collar these Hungarians without a warrant or a constable, or something of the sort."

"John Markle will be unable to send them word to look out for you," was the reply. "Probably he doesn't know you have arrived. Greenville is in the hills, twelve miles away."

They set out soon after nightfall, skirting the village and striking into the open highway, which led past the home farm of John Markle. Half a mile beyond, a neat white house was almost hidden behind a clump of trees. The front windows were darkened, and the path to the dooryard grass-grown. Barrington boldly made for the kitchen and halted to reconnoiter. They heard loud talk, the noise of a quarrel, and a discordant chorus of song. The sound of it was so insolently lawless that Barrington lost his temper and forgot his promise.

"You are in no condition for a scrimmage," whispered Mr. Bayne. "Please let it alone."

"We will merely saunter in—to see who's there," murmured the obdurate chief officer as he advanced. Mr. Bayne sighed and let his hand rest on the revolver in the side pocket of his coat. He had foreseen squally weather. Barrington softly tried the kitchen door, found it locked, and set his shoulder against it. The result pleased him. Without doubt he was convalescent. There was a splintering crash, and the door flew inward, sagging from the hinges. It was instantly followed by Barrington and his comrade.

Their method of sauntering in produced an extraordinary effect, a tableau, for the dozen men seated at a rough plank table neither stirred nor spoke. Behind them stood Joe and Mike, tenants and proprietors, like a brace of hairy villains in a stage picture. For the moment, Barrington was not an invader, but an apparition, and was quick to perceive his advantage. His voice rang out in tones of practiced command:

"Drop that bottle, Mike! Back away from the chair, Joe! Steady now! The rest of you stay as you are. Let's see who of you I know by name. One, two, three sots, never mind you—it's a pity you didn't drink yourselves to death long ago. Ah, young Fred Taylor and——"

Mr. Bayne nudged him, and slid the pistol into his fist, but he held it behind his back and went on to say:

"A chicken-livered gang! We shall have plenty of witnesses this time. Who are you?"

He indicated a blushing, tubby individual with mutton-chop whiskers.

"The new butcher, if you please," was the whimpering response. "If this gets out it will ruin my trade. The women will boycott me."

This broke the spell, and there was a threatening stir. Barrington stepped forward to say:

"I don't need this gun to tame you, but I wish to keep you quiet for half an hour or so."

Letting them have a glimpse of the weapon, he spoke over his shoulder to Mr. Bayne:

"Go to the next house and do some telephoning. Invite the minister and

the squire and the principal of the academy, and any other men who want this rotten nuisance suppressed. Ask them to fetch their wives along. Tell them we are giving a free exhibition for one night only."

"Immense!" cried the elderly mariner as he hurried into the darkness. "And I never thought of a dodge like that. My wits are not geared to move fast enough."

Barrington moved to a side of the room where he could command the door. Leaning against the ancient chimney, he twirled the revolver, not even troubling himself to menace the assemblage with it. What made their situation so excessively awkward was the implicit conviction that young Mr. Barrington would not hesitate to drill a hole through the first man who made a hostile motion. For all they knew, he had been sworn in as an officer of the law. And there had been something in the rugged, unassuming aspect of Mr. Bayne, gray-eyed, lean and hard, to inspire a wholesome fear of his return. Men of the breed of these two were unfamiliar to this Eppingham generation. They threw back to the pioneers and seafarers who had conquered the wilderness and the red Indian. Weaponless, Barrington would have been unafraid, but it was necessary to preserve the tableau intact.

Glasses stood untasted, and mugs had ceased to journey between the table and the keg. The butcher groaned, and there was a great deal of nervous coughing, Mike and Joe wearily shifting from one leg to the other and glaring at Barrington with impotent venom. Those previously suspended sentences of twelve months each hung heavy over their heads. This masterful intruder was a very devil of a dead man, and they liked the manner of this visitation far less than that other occasion when he had interfered with their illegal traffic in liquor. Then it had been an honest combat with bottles, chairs, and fists.

A buggy rattled in the distance, and the sharp hoofbeat of a good horse hammered the highway. The approach was curiously distinct in the enforced silence of the room. When in front of the house the noise of the vehicle suddenly ceased. Barrington became even more alert, and watched the door. Mike whispered excitedly to Joe, who wrung his hands. Their captor compelled them to be quiet. He had a most lamentably careless way of juggling with the pistol, and under his breath he hummed: "Will you walk into my parlor, said the spider to the fly."

Having led his horse into the yard and tied it to a tree, the visitor in the buggy walked to the kitchen door and failed to perceive that it had been forced open. The light confused his vision as he entered—a short, gray-bearded man in a linen duster, with the smooth-shaven upper lip of the traditional New England deacon or rural banker. Halting just inside the threshold, he could see nothing wrong with the tableau as he heartily exclaimed:

"Hello, boys! How are you, Mike? Full house? A little mite chilly driving over the hills from Greenville. Whisky for me, Joe, but not the kind you make in the cellar."

The guests replied not to his greeting, and the tenants were as though fastened to the floor. Mr. John Markle rubbed his eyes, and became aware that in the shadowy niche by the chimney there was an unbidden guest. The emotions of Mr. Markle were so overpowering that he instantly took his place in the frozen tableau, and the stillness of the room was broken only by another tremulous, involuntary sigh from the butcher. Mr. Markle pinched his upper lip, glanced cautiously in the direction of the door, and beheld the stern, unsympathetic countenance of Mr. Bayne, who had returned to reënforce his ship-

mate. Barrington's voice was mellow with humor as he said:

"Sit down, Mr. Markle. Don't let me interrupt. At the head of the table, if you please. You are in your own house. Fill the gentleman's order, Joe. There, look pleasant! There are no free drinks to-night, Mr. Markle, so put your money on the table."

The butcher stared dolefully at his own dollar bill, which reposed in front of him as evidence of a most incriminating nature. Never was there a party so unconvivial as that over which the long-faced John Markle was obliged, by force of circumstances, to preside. There was really so little to be said that he sensibly saved his breath. He suspected Barrington of staging the scene for a flash-light photograph, but the intolerable delay lengthened itself, and nothing happened.

In reality it was no more than twenty minutes before the vanguard of the audience bidden to view the tableau rattled into the yard in the livery-stable hack, the bony steeds at the gallop. Down from the box flew the station agent and ushered in the minister and his wife, the principal of the academy, and the third selectman. Close behind them, in a Concord wagon, arrived three citizens less distinguished, who hilariously announced that half the village was coming along on foot.

It was not Barrington's intention to muster a mob, and he endeavored to admit only those who had influence and were respected, but presently the place was clamorous with eager spectators. The earlier arrivals beheld the tableau before it dissolved into a huddled, frightened group. This was what Barrington had planned, that the tale should be plain to read, but he had not expected to add John Markle himself as the chief attraction. It was a sad and sordid exhibition, with a touch of comic relief, when the butcher's wife, a woman of militant determination, pressed through the crowd and laid hands on her erring consort. He vanished into outer darkness, and his expostulations were muffled, as if a firm grip compressed the back of his neck.

The station agent was heard to remark, in a jocular manner:

"It does certainly appear to me, John Markle, that Ed has put one over on you this time. I had a notion that he was liable to surprise the town, but this went clear beyond my expectations."

"Let him go home," said Barrington. "This is not a raid. John Markle came to believe that he was a law unto himself in Eppingham, and that nobody cared very much. Pshaw, he was no more than a bad habit that had grown little by little. We are all proud of him to-night as our most important citizen and town official. Give him three cheers as he sneaks out of the back door."

Markle shook his fist, and shouted as the crowd made way for him: "He held a pistol on me—State's prison offense, and he'll find it out pretty soon. All I did was to walk in here to make sure these Polacks were obeying the law, same as I warned 'em time and again."

There were derisive cheers, groans, catcalls, laughter, as he climbed into the buggy and slashed the good mare with his whip. From ridicule, the temper of the mob of men and boys outside suddenly veered to illogical wrath against the Hungarians. They were not, in truth, culpable for assuming that the laws of their adopted country were made to be broken. This Barrington tried to make clear, after instructing Mr. Bayne to smuggle Mike and Joe out through the woodshed door and tell them to run for it. There was loud talk of tar and feathers and riding on a rail, but it soon subsided, for Barrington could persuade as well as bully, and

he appealed to them as a neighbor who had sought to perform a service. The villagers contented themselves with smashing bottles and kegs and building a bonfire of the tables and benches, nor were there any zealots more active than the thirsty dozen who had comprised Barrington's tableau.

CHAPTER XVII.

The minister was a man no longer young who had found Eppingham a disheartening parish. Next morning he went in search of Barrington, whom he discovered at breakfast with Mr. Bayne on board the schooner. Hesitant was the minister's manner as of one who had much to explain and was uncertain of his welcome at the hands of this domineering seafarer. Barrington surmised the trouble, and promptly assured him:

"You don't have to tell me, unless you wish to. John Markle has managed the church as if it were his store. He has run the town in the same way. Everything had to be Markleized. You could not throw him overboard as a deacon, and the other deacons were under his thumb. You were carried along as a passenger."

"I might have protested more strongly from the pulpit, Mr. Barrington, or resigned my pastorate, but I hoped and prayed for better things, for an awakened conscience in the church. It seemed impossible that this deadly apathy could continue much longer."

"And when Markle and his methods were objected to, there were good people in this town who honestly thought he was persecuted," frowned Barrington. "They had been taught to look up to him as children. He was rich and godly, and his religion made a noise like a brass band. Some of those who really knew him thought it was a bully good joke on the church to see him parading the aisles as a deacon."

"And to think that you could demolish him in a moment, when we had seemed to be so useless," sighed the minister.

"Every man to his trade, my dear sir. A taste of fo'castle manners was the proper treatment for John Markle. You must not give my motives too much credit. I was anxious to do a favor for my friend, Mr. Bayne. Demolished him, did you say?"

"Yes, it has brought Eppingham out of its trance, this startling object lesson of yours. There will be a church meeting at once to elect a deacon to succeed him."

"May I suggest a splendid man?" cried Barrington, all enthusiasm. "He is sure to be one of your solid citizens. Your church can be proud of him, and he will work for its welfare."

He nodded at Mr. Bayne, who modestly declined the honor, but his chief officer emphatically added:

"I shall make him accept. Nothing is too good for him." The minister cordially approved, and went on to say:

"Another matter of importance is our town government. Late last night several of us met at the parsonage and organized an informal committee. There will be a demand for another town meeting at once, in order to get rid of John Markle as first selectman. We have prepared charges of misconduct in office, and, thanks to you, there is a host of witnesses. May we use your name, Mr. Barrington, as willing to serve on the board of selectmen?"

"Thank you, no. It wouldn't do. For one thing, my plans are uncertain. At present I am without employment. And I should not wish it said that I had a selfish reason for standing John Markle on his head."

"But you will consent to help us in other ways," said the minister. "At this special town meeting a measure must be properly prepared and pre-

sented for the lease to Mr. Bayne of such town property as he may require. You are the man to introduce it, Mr. Barrington."

"I will do it like a shot, and glad of the chance. Mr. Bayne will load me up with facts and figures. As I understand it, he wants the strip of land where the deep water makes in. This included a wharf and approach owned by John Markle."

"The town can vote to acquire this additional property," replied the minister, who had once studied law, "and include it in the lease to Mr. Bayne. In such case it would be appraised and taken over under the right of eminent domain."

"Another pleasant dose for Markle," smiled Barrington. "It seems as though we might be able to make a thorough job of him."

"He shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand," aptly quoted the minister, "and it fell, and great was the fall thereof."

The editor of the Eppingham *Gazette* omitted mention of the most interesting news of the week, that Leander Nickerson had been compelled to hunt a cyclone cellar and that John Markle had given a party at the house of Mike and Joe. The return of the native was chronicled in a brief paragraph which was telegraphed to newspapers in Boston, Concord, and Portland as an item of general interest. It so befell that this information was read by Stella Corbin during the leisurely journey from the mountains with Susan and Harriet. Stella withheld the tidings while she strove to adjust her own universe. She had almost ceased to believe that Edward Barrington would be alive, and yet she could not imagine him dead, wherefore she received the incredible tidings quite calmly, somewhat as if this were what she had really expected to hear. She was afraid, however, of the effect upon Susan, for there seemed no way of breaking it gradually. Hiding the newspaper behind her, she hurried to Susan's room and announced:

"I am so sorry that I can't go back to Eppingham with you to-morrow. I have been thinking it over, and, really, I must return to New York. The summer is over—and—and I can't help feeling that my brother Ashley needs me to keep house for him."

"But, my dear child, I need you, too!" cried Susan; adding contritely: "It sounds very selfish of me. I can't expect to hold you forever. But this is a sudden decision."

"Yes, but you are not going to need me as much as you suppose;" and Stella's voice had a thrilling note. "In fact, I shall be superfluous."

"Why? I have never so much as mentioned living with Harriet again. And I suspect she has plans of her own, for Mr. Bayne has been paying her marked attentions."

"Oh, Susan, I am so glad that my faith has been a comfort to you, but there is no room in your house for me now, no more need of me and my faith."

Susan stared at the radiant girl, caught a glimmer of comprehension, and could not speak for weeping. Her head was against Stella's shoulder, and their fingers were interlocked as Stella murmured:

"He is waiting for you in Eppingham, home from the sea that has given him back to you. Here it is; read it while I find out if there is a train to-night."

Away sped Stella, eager to charter a special train, if necessary, but resisting the temptation to disclose herself as a fairy princess. She was not presumed to be able to afford extravagances. There was no train for Eppingham until morning, but Susan endured the delay with beautiful patience. It sufficed her to know that Edward was so near.

Why should she fret at waiting for one night when there had been so many, many nights of barren waiting?

"The house is ready for him," she exclaimed, fair to look at and girlishly animated. "Why do you speak as though he were driving you away from it, Stella?"

"I shall see him some day, of course," replied Miss Corbin, and her smile was puzzling. "Just now it might seem a trifle awkward for both of us, although he has no idea how intimately I know him. What do you expect to tell him about me?"

"That his mother fell in love with you, and wishes him to do likewise."

"Perhaps he found a sweetheart in South America," suddenly spoke up Harriet. "They do say that those black-eyed belles that wear mantillas, or eat 'em, I always forget which, are terribly fascinating."

"He did nothing of the kind," flashed Stella Corbin. "How dare you accuse him of such a thing?"

Harriet meekly apologized, and Stella withdrew to write a hasty letter to Mr. Bayne. He was commanded to advance Mr. Barrington's interests in every manner possible, to send her frequent reports, and, above all, to maintain the most absolute secrecy. The very moment that her association was suspected, she should abandon her investments in Eppingham. At parting she said to Susan and Harriet:

"I shall come back some day, of course, and I hope that Mr. Edward Barrington may care to call if he is in New York on business. You can never know what it has meant to me to know you two blessed women. You are so different. Good-by, and God bless you."

It was the station agent who galloped over from the town hall when Edward's mother arrived in Eppingham, and pantingly announced:

"Ed sent me over a-purpose. He was on the point of breakin' loose with a speech, and couldn't leave, and he says to hustle you and Harriet Page into the gallery, and please forgive him for not being on hand."

"In the town hall—a speech!" stammered Susan, as she followed the agitated escort. "Edward never made a speech in his life. What is the occasion?"

"Biggest town meetin' ever held—farmers all in from back roads—stores closed—everybody you ever heard of, all rammed-jammed in the hall, except John Markle and Leander Nickerson."

"But Mr. Markle is first selectman, and Nickerson is the moderator."

"Not to-day they ain't, Mrs. Barrington. You never saw two men so darn conspicuous by their absence. This has been the suddenest twenty-four hours that ever struck Eppingham village."

Proudly the station agent conducted the two dumfounded ladies into the anteroom of the old town hall and up the winding staircase to seats which overlooked the main floor. The populace, fickle here as elsewhere, had swung over to Barrington in a day. The king was dead, long live the king. He had made ridiculous figures of the enemy, accomplishing it with such apparent ease, with so much spectacular boldness, that he was looked to for leadership, particularly by the younger men, to whom his career and personality were bound to appeal. He came among them clean-handed, disinterested, courageous, and, more than all else, he belonged to them and had the right to hit out from the shoulder.

This was why the crowd which filled the town hall was so ready to give Susan Barrington an ovation that fairly stunned her as she stood bowing her thanks. All she saw was Edward upon the platform. He blew her a kiss and waited for the opportunity to address the meeting. When order was restored,

he began to say, without embarrassment, as one who would talk matters over among his friends:

"It may seem to some of you that I look for trouble whenever I come home from sea, that I am a sort of disturbance, like an occasional squall. Please don't hold any mistaken notion that I should be glad of a chance to run this town, as if I were the skipper or chief officer of it. There is something to be said in favor of nautical discipline. A ship has to have a boss, and men must obey him on the jump, for the sake of safety and efficiency. And every man on board knows what his duties are. He is held strictly responsible for the performance of them.

"Now, this old town of ours can get along without a boss, although John Markle would disagree with me there, but it does need more of the sailorman's code of duty and responsibility. When everybody's business is nobody's business, you are sure to have slackness and dirt and disorder. Worthless men are tolerated because it means a rumpus to get rid of them.

"You all know what has been the matter with Eppingham, and I have no intention of preaching to you. This is not a steamer's bridge, and I am merely one of the crew. What I want you to understand is the reason why I pitched in and raised all this rumpus. Mr. Bayne and I worked together on the deck of a sinking ship, and he saved scores of lives because he was the man for the job. By way of reward, the corporation that we sailed for turned him adrift, for he was considered too old to be in line of promotion for a command. He deserved better luck, and it came to him. Somebody was wise enough to invest in his experience and ability, and he brought his capital to Eppingham.

"From the day he landed here, as a friend of mine, he was fought and hindered and snarled at, while the village looked on. Even a report of my death was twisted in order to slander him and drive him away. I have made it my business to see that he gets what he wants, and I am sure you people really want him to have it."

Barrington read from his notes the data compiled by means of the patient, intelligent investigation of Mr. Bayne and the terms of a lease which should be fair to both contracting parties. Discussion was almost superfluous. The assemblage was anxious to put it to vote with a hip, hip, hurrah! for Ed Barrington, and the most unfeeling gratification that John Markle's wharf and frontage were to be included. The electorate of Eppingham was in no half-hearted mood. Barrington had shaken it up, and the sensation was enjoyable. With a tact which did them credit, his fellow townsmen permitted him to leave the hall and join his mother, curbing their desire to question and congratulate him.

With an arm around her waist, he whisked Susan into the livery-stable hack, and they were homeward bound. Past the wharves they went and along the river road before much was said, Susan tightly clasping his hand as though fearing to lose him.

"There is my haven for you," said she, as they turned into the lane. A lump was in his throat as she ran into the house ahead of him to open the shutters and raise the shades. The afternoon streamed in, golden, friendly, a symbol that the shadow dwelt no more beneath this roof. To Edward, as they explored them together, every room seemed hauntingly familiar, and he perceived how lovingly, with what scrupulous devotion, the homestead of his boyish memories had been reproduced. This was to be his welcome had he returned with Captain Moses Carpenter, and he read his mother's purpose, to persuade him to feel that youth

was still in his possession and life well worth a new beginning.

A photograph upon a claw-footed desk recalled him from a reverie, and he crossed the room to examine it. Brave and kind and lovely was the face of the girl of his dreams while exiled, and her eyes seemed to smile into his as he called to his mother:

"Miss Corbin! My Miss Corbin of the *Columbian!* Do you know her? Where did this picture come from?"

"I wish she were yours," calmly replied Susan, enjoying his consternation. "She has been here all summer long. Her brother was with her for a short time. A chivalrous man, with the most charming manners. I was sorry to have him go."

"I heard him say, himself, that he was all of that," feebly replied Edward, who wondered if his damaged head could be playing a trick on him. "Wait, please. My mind feels a bit crowded. You will have to steam under one bell. About Miss Corbin, if you will begin at the beginning."

"It was a delightful coincidence, Edward. She became interested in a poor family named Carney. He was a steward in the *Columbian,* who died suddenly in New York. She wished to place them in the country, and happened to read an advertisement of the Hamlin Eaton cottage at East Eppingham. Of course, I have my own opinion that she associated you with our town."

"That is the proud and doting mother of it," smiled he. "Haven't I been flattered enough for one day? Imagine Miss Corbin caring a rap where I hailed from. And then what?"

"Stella adopted the Carneys, and they are doing wonderfully well. I fear it was more than she could afford to do for them, for, while she is in comfortable circumstances, she has no more than she needs, I am sure. Her tastes are as simple as mine, and I was very glad that she could live with me for part of the summer. It made living expenses less for both of us."

This artless narrative almost caught him off his guard, but he managed to conceal his surprise, and blandly responded:

"A very sensible arrangement. And it must have been congenial. Er—did she mention me at all?"

"We discussed you most of the time," answered Susan, "and I told her the truth, that you were the pattern of all the manly virtues. She did not seem bored. In fact, I suspect she agreed with me."

"She had to be polite," was the skeptical comment. "She met Mr. Bayne, of course?"

"Yes, he came down quite often. They had a mutual friend in you."

"And she actually stayed all summer, mother?"

"Yes. Her companionship was everything in the world to me, and she seemed to realize it. And after I had lost all hope, she kept her faith in your return. I think I should have gone utterly to pieces without her."

"Her brother, Ashley Corbin—do you know why he left her?"

"He disliked the country, for one thing," seriously explained Susan. "Mr. Bayne said something which made me infer that you and Mr. Corbin were not friends; that you had quarreled on shipboard. I have wondered if Stella and her brother may have disagreed about you. She is a high-spirited girl, intensely loyal to her friends."

"That is interesting," said he. "And you admired him?"

"He made a most favorable impression, Edward. He rescued me from a neighbor's cow. The creature insisted on eating my sheets and tablecloths."

"It was a cow?" And Edward was comically disgusted at this anticlimax.

"A spotted one, with a crumpled horn," laughed Susan.

"But Mr. Corbin did you a real serv-

ice, mother, and you feel under obligations to him?"

"Most assuredly. He played the gentleman to a woman in distress."

"Then, if I have my own reasons for disliking him, he must be crossed off the list. I can't fairly do anything else. He has disarmed me."

While they loitered in the shade of the trees, and Susan's glad eyes no longer absently sought the river for the gleam of a topsail beyond the wooded point, Mr. Bayne was in the cabin of his schooner wrestling with a letter which he felt it his duty to send to Miss Stella Corbin in New York. He might have been likened to a man who had been hit behind the ear with a boomerang, and this is how his laborious pen tried to express his emotions:

As per your instructions this day received by mail, I hasten to submit a report. It is putting it mildly to say that things are all stern foremost and wrong end to, as far as I am concerned. Mr. Barrington has been working for me every minute, while I am supposed to be employed by you in his interest. He took the town by storm, and has stood John Markle on his beam ends. It was done by moral suasion, nothing rough, but I was reminded of the time Mr. Barrington disciplined the quartermaster, Olestrom, and the donkeyman, and the sailor. What I mean is, Mr. Barrington knows how to get results.

Everything he does is intended to help me, Miss Corbin, which was not what you had in mind at all. He is putting every pound of energy into shoving my business ahead. The town has given me all I asked for, and the farmers and merchants will patronize the shipping company. I have the promise of several cargoes as soon as I am ready to load, and shall want to employ a second vessel to handle the apple and potato crops, even before we build a warehouse.

Your investment will win out, but what am I to do about Mr. Barrington? He has no berth in view, and I feel delicate about suggesting that he come in with me on a salary, for his motive is absolutely unselfish. Shall I offer him the command of your schooner now in port, or shall I take her and turn over the management of the enterprise to him? I will cheerfully find some excuse to resign and pull out entirely. Mr. Barrington is a far abler man in every way. At present I am blocking him, and feel guilty of false pretenses. I am yours, most respectfully, JAMES A. BAYNE.

This painstaking communication which so disturbed the author had quite a different effect when read by Miss Stella Corbin, who was recruiting a staff of servants for the grand and gloomy mansion. She was rash enough to say to herself that she could hug Mr. Bayne for it. Here was welcome confirmation of her belief that Edward Barrington was a strong and gentle knight. Already the investment had yielded dividends beyond her expectation, but they were rather sentimental than tangible, and it was for her to solve the obvious problem and ease the mind of poor Mr. Bayne. It was her conclusion that the situation must be left to work itself out, and she therefore replied as follows:

I am perfectly satisfied with your management of the Barrington Packet Company, and hope you will send me the plans and estimates for the new wharves and warehouses. If you need more schooners to take care of such trade as can be diverted from the railroad before winter, please don't hesitate to buy or charter them. I suggest that you open an office in Eppingham, with a room where the farmers and lumbermen can drop in and feel that they have headquarters. Place on file the newspapers, market reports, and trade journals.

Mr. Barrington ought not to go to sea, for his mother's sake and his own, so he must not be forced into it for lack of anything better to do. He expected an uphill struggle at home, and he will be contented and thankful to work for you if he is convinced that you actually need him. I think you had better make a business trip to New York before long, for I am simply crazy to hear every bit of news.

Letters from Susan had much to tell of Edward's adventures, and it was also conveyed to Stella that he had forgiven Ashley for whatever it was that had occurred between them on shipboard. In Edward's words, "it had been crossed off the slate." Now the

marooned brother, as forlorn a remittance man as ever lived, had weighed upon the sister's conscience more heavily than she would have cared to admit. If Edward Barrington were willing to forgive and forget, it was her duty to lend a helping hand. Moreover, it was manifestly unjust to hold Ashley accountable for the death of a seafarer who had returned and was most aggressively alive. A telegram to Avon Heights fetched the disinherited one with a celerity which seemed rather pitiful, as though he had been waiting to clutch at the slightest hope of a reconciliation.

During these few months Ashley had become paler and flabbier, and gone was every vestige of the old overbearing manner. What shocked Stella was a discouraged shabbiness of aspect. Ashley, the heavy swell, who had chosen his tailor more carefully than he selected his friends. Uncertain of his reception, he tried to dissemble his nervous apprehension as Stella greeted him with no visible resentment and asked him to spend the night. His own room was in readiness, and he was to consider himself a guest.

"So I am not invited back as your brother?" said he. "A guest? Making it as rough as you can for me?"

"That is for us to decide, Ashley. Perhaps we can come to some understanding that will be happier for you."

"The sooner the better," said he. "Do I look as if it had been a happy summer?"

"I am very sorry for you," was the kind reply. "I have not been sending you much money, but it was enough to support you."

"I squandered it on the merry life, of course, Stella. Don't scold. Anything but that! Merry? I have been chief mourner at my own funeral. Now that Barrington has turned up, you ought to let me off a bit easier."

"And did you find out that he was alive?" she demanded.

"He came to Avon Heights, on the trail of Captain McCready Pope. It was an awfully queer business. They marched down to the beach together for a powwow, the captain as white as a sheet. He didn't come back to see me again, so I never did know what it was all about."

"And Mr. Barrington said nothing to you?"

"Paid no attention to me whatever, although he was presumed to be thirsting for my gore. Captain Pope had been kicked out of his ship, and the silly ass fancied I could help him with the company. You see, Barrington's ghost had interviewed him off Temple Rock, and he flunked it completely, was all shot to pieces. That finished him as Hersey's pet."

This was news to Stella, for her letters from Eppingham had contained no reference to the downfall of the popular commander. Barrington had prefered to withhold from his mother the story of his vagrant, irresponsible voyage in the *Hesperian* as too difficult of comprehension.

"But there was no ghost," was Stella's wondering comment.

"There might have been, for all I know. You can search me," said Ashley, with a shrug. "There is no telling what that Barrington chap is liable to do. I am a sample. He made a total ruin of me. And please consider the fate of Captain McCready Pope. I hope Allen P. Hersey is on his list. The pompous ingrate refused to lend me a hundred."

"I may take up the case of Mr. Hersey myself, at the proper time," declared the sister. "If I should gain control of the company, there would be a new general manager."

"Planning to shove Barrington into the corporation, are you?" ventured Ashley. "Now, don't be cross with me.

Far be it from this prodigal son to stir up strife. I honestly want to know where I stand. Seriously, I've got to pull up and make a decent start of some kind. I have been looking over the edge, Stella, and it scared me. I can't go on this way. It gives me the shivers to think of it. You may not believe it, but I am ready to give an imitation of a man holding down a job. And if you intend to take an active interest in the Tropical Navigation Company, buying more stock, and all that, possibly you will feel like putting me in as a clerk or something. If Barrington goes in, there will be no show for me. That is why I asked the question. He has no use for me."

"He expects to stay and work in Eppingham, Ashley. And he is no longer an enemy of yours. Can you guess why? His mother admires you, and you were of service to her."

"Well, I did cast my bread upon the waters that time. And so you have not undeceived her? I am one of her illusions?"

"I shall never shatter it," smiled Stella, "and Edward Barrington will never tell. Here is a suggestion, and I hope it may appeal to you: I dare not trust you again with a large income, and without it you would be wretchedly unhappy in New York, and I am not at all sure that we can be contented to live together under the same roof. You say you are willing to work. There may be a chance for you in Eppingham. Mr. Bayne, who was the second officer in the *Columbian,* is building up a schooner trade out of Eppingham. If I should talk to him about you, he might be willing to give you a position at a small salary. There is a good deal to be done in the way of interesting the farmers and running about and looking things up in competition with the railroad. Your manners are agreeable when you choose to exert yourself, and you might be useful as a traffic agent or promoter."

Ashley's large countenance was quizzically good-humored as he replied:

"Why no mention of Barrington? Are you afraid I will shy off?"

"He may take a position under Mr. Bayne, but he will not interfere with you as long as you are a friend of his mother."

"Um-m! I wonder where Bayne got any money to set himself up in business?"

"That is no concern of yours," she admonished him. "If you will try to behave yourself, and earn your humble salary, I promise to help you in every possible way."

"It sounds a bit more cheerful than Avon Heights, Stella. But to have to bump into Barrington every day——"

"I advise you to apologize to him like a man. Do you wish to think it over?"

"Hardly! Please break it gently to Mr. Bayne that you are sending him one brand snatched from the burning. You must have a pull with him. Back to Eppingham to serve out my sentence? Stella, I take off my hat. There is no way to beat your game."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The native conservatism of Eppingham had been shaken, but a revolution was not to be achieved in a day. When the excitement subsided, it was obvious to Barrington that his work had no more than begun. Soon the doubters would croak, the peanut politicians conspire to mend the shattered machine, and the railroad renew the attack with a more efficient tool than the discarded Leander Nickerson. In Mr. Bayne's undertaking something more than commercial success was at stake. With it was joined the cause of better government and a new spirit in the affairs of the community. On other grounds than loyal friendship Barrington foresaw a

task large enough to engage his wholehearted endeavor and to content him with serving as a subordinate.

He was unable to overcome his reluctance to accept employment with Mr. Bayne and permit his enemies to construe it as a reward until a telegram from Allen P. Hersey forced the issue. Mr. Blair had been promoted to the captaincy of the *Hesperian,* and Barrington was offered the chief officer's berth by way of making amends. The general manager kept one ear fairly close to the ground, and possibly it occurred to him that Miss Stella Corbin might view this suggestion with favor. Barrington showed the message to Mr. Bayne, and contemptuously exclaimed:

"I told him to his face that I could not be hired to sail under him."

"But this gives you the opportunity to step back into the line at your old rank and salary," was the sober comment. "And it removes you from the black list with other companies. I can't allow you to tie up with me and fight my battles unless you are willing to be paid for it. It puts me in the wrong. It's right enough for you to enjoy a vacation and recuperate, but what next?"

"It is a great vacation so far," Barrington assured him, "but I realize that you must feel awkward about it. I suppose that this telegram from Hersey should make me look at the situation from a different angle. What is your proposition, Mr. Bayne?"

"That you sign on with me at a hundred a month, and act as shore superintendent while I organize the seagoing end of it. We must make a good showing before winter, and I shall have my hands full with the vessels, inspection, repairs, and refitting. The people here know you, and you have the knack of driving things at top speed."

"But isn't a hundred a month too much at the start?" Barrington objected. "I can live on less, and this is a gamble which I should be glad to share with you."

"The arrangement suits me. Is this obeying orders? Would you be apt to squabble with Allen P. Hersey about your salary?" And the even-tempered Mr. Bayne was testy for once.

Barrington respectfully held his tongue, and in this manner they came to terms. There was no further occasion for argument until Stella wrote Mr. Bayne of her decision to send Ashley on trial. As a favor to her, could something be found for him to do? He seemed genuinely interested, and was quite cheerful and resigned. And would Mr. Barrington be patient and remember that her brother had always been an idler? She was very sanguine of the result of the association with the two mariners whose ideas of discipline were so wholesomely strict.

The diplomacy of Mr. Bayne had been heavily taxed, and he flinched from this latest burden, but in his simple gospel one did as the owners instructed, and he carried the news to Barrington, plausibly explaining:

"Miss Corbin heard my plans talked over during the summer, and this notion must have popped into her head."

"Please don't hesitate on my account, Mr. Bayne. She has a high opinion of you, evidently, and plenty of confidence that you will win out. If she thinks Ashley ought to have a chance to make good, let her send him along. If you want to put him in the office, I shall be glad to take him in hand. There may be something in him, now that he has had the wind knocked out of his sails."

Barrington pondered, and then went on to say:

"That reminds me. It would be just like Miss Corbin to care to invest in a man like you. For all I know, you have the necessary capital to swing this proposition, but it looks bigger all the time, and if this warehousing scheme

succeeds, it will require a lot of money. And Miss Corbin will feel more interested than ever, on Ashley's account."

"I was lucky enough to make pretty solid connections," gravely returned Mr. Bayne, "tremendously lucky for a seafaring man who thought himself stranded. Thank you for the hint, though. I shall keep Miss Corbin in mind."

"We both worked for her in the Navigation Company," Barrington ingenuously remarked. "She owns a pile of the stock. It would be great fun to feel that she had an interest here. A man would work his head off for her."

This seemed to offer the long-suffering Mr. Bayne a solution of his difficulty, and he went to New York a few days later, ostensibly to look at another schooner. He considered himself a double-dealing impostor and was in exceedingly low spirits. Stella met him by appointment at a ship broker's office and demurely she harkened to his perplexities. These he summed up in an ultimatum:

"It is time for me to get out, Miss Corbin. I have been wearing false colors in a good cause, but that makes me no more reconciled. You can't imagine how hard it is for me to see Mr. Barrington every day and listen to his enthusiastic ideas for pushing me and my business ahead——"

"And he doesn't suspect me, not the least little bit?" eagerly broke in Stella. "What did he say about taking poor Ashley?"

"He swallowed it without blinking," the mariner pithily answered. "Not that Mr. Barrington is stupid, mind you, but he can see nothing to it but his loyalty to me, and he is too confoundedly modest to assume that anybody might care to do something for him. It is a stiff yarn, me and my pot of money to invest, but he says I deserve it, and he lets it go at that."

"And he has consented to work for you on a salary? A hundred dollars a month? But he must be worth ever so much more than that. I am afraid you are scrimping, Mr. Bayne."

"He said it was too much, and his only worry is that he may not earn it. I felt like punching his head. As incomes go in Eppingham, he is comfortably off."

"And people do manage to live comfortably in Eppingham on twelve hundred a year?" reflectively murmured Stella. "Dear me, do you think you can manage to raise his salary in another year?"

"Drop me out of it, and give him command, Miss Corbin, and it would be fair to double his salary."

"But I have said nothing about dropping you. And don't you dare offer your resignation."

"Then why don't you buy an interest in the concern—you know what I mean—go through the motions of buying it?" hopefully suggested Mr. Bayne. "It would make me feel ever so much easier in my conscience. And it would please Mr. Barrington tremendously. The village need not know it if you prefer to keep your affairs to yourself."

"What a clever idea!" delightedly exclaimed Stella. "You were never intended to play the low-browed conspirator. It worries you too much. How large an interest in the Barrington Packet Company are you willing to sell me?"

"Shall we call it a half interest?" chuckled the mariner, who caught the spirit of the game. "The notion of working for you seemed to make a great hit when I mentioned it to Mr. Barrington."

"How splendid of him. The papers must be prepared at once, so that you can show them to him."

"On second thought, Miss Corbin, I should rather have you own fifty-one per cent of the company. Then you would be in a position to disrate me

as unsatisfactory and place Mr. Barrington in charge. It would be more agreeable to me to work under him."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," she warmly retorted. "He would refuse to supersede you, and my whole purpose is to prevent him from learning that—that——"

Mr. Bayne came to the rescue by suggesting:

"That you did all this to keep a good man's memory green in the town he used to sail from."

"That expresses it most charmingly. And he said he should like to work for me?"

"To work his head off was the way he put it. When are you coming to Eppingham to see your investment, Miss Corbin?"

"To see Mr. Barrington? Oh, you mean the Packet Company. I really can't say. I hope to spend next summer in Eppingham if you can find me a comfortable house."

"The old Levering place is for sale," said he. "You know the house, big and white and square, with the pillars in front, on the handsomest street in the village. It was built by Mrs. Susan Barrington's great-grandfather."

"And she was born in it!" cried Stella. "Please buy it for me, Mr. Bayne, and have it put in perfect repair."

Returning to Eppingham, Mr. Bayne obediently negotiated with the owners of the Levering homestead, and, after a week of dickering, secured it for four thousand dollars. It was assumed that he acted in his own behalf, and Susan Barrington read it as an omen of happy significance, nor could she resist asking him if a date had been set for his wedding. A bashful suitor was this capable sailorman, and this raillery threw him into confusion. The consequences might be serious if such a rumor should reach Harriet Page before he had mustered courage to declare himself. He therefore blurted out the truth, inasmuch as Stella had not forbidden him to make it known.

Susan was both gratified and a little distressed. If Stella could afford to buy the Levering place for a summer home, and four thousand dollars was a small fortune, then she must be quite well off in her own right. How would this affect Edward's attitude toward her? He had his mother's old-fashioned pride and independence. As a matchmaker Susan had her aspirations which seemed possible of realization now that Edward had established himself in Mr. Bayne's employ.

Her fear that Stella might be an heiress was diminished when Ashley appeared on the scene as a very unimportant member of the shipping company's staff. This made the theory reasonable that Stella looked forward to a permanent home in Eppingham, and was planning to keep house for her brother. Rents in New York were frightful, and living in Eppingham had the merit of economy. Certainly Ashley was not opulent, for he maintained himself on the twelve dollars a week which Mr. Bayne was gracious enough to consider his services worth. Said Susan to her son:

"It is none of my affair, but I am at a loss to understand why you should have disliked Mr. Corbin. He is not brilliant, and I imagine he has been unfortunate, but he tries to do his best."

"I haven't a word to say against him, mother. In fact, he surprises me. His unfortunate time of it has sweetened his disposition until people really seem to like him. We are hammering ideas into his cranium, one at a time. Mr. Bayne has bought a secondhand automobile, and Ashley handles it like a wizard. He is cruising about the county, making speeches at grange meetings to crack up cheap transportation and the storage-warehouse system. He presides over our office reading

room, and is making a sort of club of it. Mr. Bayne feeds facts and figures to him, and he looks as wise as an owl."

The autumn was several weeks older when young Mr. Corbin and his automobile came whirling in from East Eppingham at a speed which scandalized the main street. To Mr. Bayne he grandly announced that Hamlin Eaton, the lumberman, was preparing to cut a tract four miles back from the river, and expected to saw two million feet of boards during the winter. The Barrington Packet Company could secure the shipment of them to Boston and New York if Mr. Bayne were willing to build a temporary wharf at East Eppingham.

"This Hamlin Eaton remembered me," explained Ashley. "Stella rented the cottage from him, and he passed by when I was doing chores in blue overalls. It made me popular with him. With a mild winter you can take this stuff when other trade is slack."

"This makes you popular with me," congratulated Barrington.

"Please put that in writing," said Ashley, "and forward it to my sister with a special-delivery stamp. She may take your word for it."

The winter was so favorable that the river remained open, excepting two weeks in January. Another year, if the commerce should warrant it, Mr. Bayne planned to add a tug to the fleet and break the ice in the channel. Three fine schooners were in commission, and there were cargoes to employ them. Ostensibly to save the wages of a skipper, Mr. Bayne commanded the new *Henrietta* for several voyages, but, in reality, he was endeavoring to make Barrington the conspicuous figure in the management and gradually to reverse their positions. As for his own future, Mr. Bayne could imagine a contentment, mellowed and serene, with Harriet Page sharing his spacious living quarters afloat during the pleasant season of the year, while he served as a humble master in the coastwise trade and flew the house flag of the Barrington Packet Company.

Other neglected ports whose traffic had been absorbed by the railroad were watching this experiment in Eppingham River. Its warehouse facilities promised to stimulate production, and in this one county the next year's acreage of potatoes would be doubled. The company agreed to advance the farmer forty cents a bushel when delivered, which gave him necessary cash, and to hold them until they could be shipped to the best advantage, in the final settlement deducting a reasonable charge for storage and interest. This arrangement offered the farmer the benefits of a coöperation which he lacked the capital to organize for himself.

Edward Barrington could see larger possibilities of profit and usefulness. This had been the vision discussed with Captain Moses Carpenter, whose faith inspired the hope of things that seemed impossible of attainment. During Barrington's career at sea, his talent for commercial enterprise had been dormant, or, rather, it had been diverted to handling men with the highest degree of efficiency. He had been unaware of his own capabilities until this opportunity was offered him, and he was a very different man from the chief officer who had wandered in New York in search of employment, helpless, bewildered, believing himself of use only on the deck of a ship.

The tidings that Stella Corbin had acquired an interest in the company fired his zeal with fresh fuel. It made his task a joyful service, and success a prize to be won for her, transmuting business into romantic adventure. As Susan had been like a mirror to reflect for Stella the image of the absent son, so now he was learning to see and know the girl who had become so intimately

a part of his mother's life. Stella had written him a note, brief and cordial, congratulating him upon his return, and he had replied in kind.

As the spring drew near, Ashley began to wonder, mildly amused, how Stella proposed to capture her headstrong sailor. She had played her hand with very pretty finesse, but her own brother couldn't be hoaxed into accepting all this devotion to Eppingham as the result of a philanthropic interest in the fortunes of the town and Mr. Bayne. It was no secret to Barrington that Stella had a thundering lot of money, reflected Ashley, and they were welcome to it. He had made a rotten mess of too much money, and there was something to be said in favor of the large toad in the small puddle. Stella had restored to him his two thousand a year, his salary had been increased to eighteen dollars a week, and he was pressing John Markle close as the village millionaire.

Eppingham was actually to have a country club, of which Ashley was president, and a board of trade, for which Barrington had suggested him as secretary. The village, curiously enough, regarded him not so much an outsider as a needed arbiter of fashion and a social ornament. All that remained of his former greatness was a certain air of condescension, politely patronizing, which reminded Eppingham of its own aristocracy, and as a friend of Susan Barrington he admittedly belonged to the elect.

He had no quarrel with destiny, but, in his opinion, Stella faced troubles of her own. She had been decent to him, all things considered, and should he stay in the straight road, she would back him with all the money he could use intelligently. What looked like a chance to help her presented itself when he glanced over a stock-market report and noticed that Tropical Navigation Company Preferred had suddenly slumped. This was unaccountable until he found in another column an explanatory paragraph which hinted at bearish rumors, based on decreased earnings and the urgent need of more modern ships.

"Have I been loading my poor, feeble mind with information about coastwise shipping all in vain?" jeered Ashley. "Tropical Navigation is a gold mine. This listens to me like Hersey and his crowd. The game is to pound the stock down and shake out the small holdings. Hersey buys all he can get hold of and the Corbin estate is blocked from gaining control. Now is Stella's time to buy. This newspaper rubbish may frighten her into selling. I'll wire her a tip to fool Mr. Allen P. Hersey. A few thousand more shares will enable her to throw him out and put Barrington in. The general manager's job carries a salary of twenty thousand, and they could marry on something like even terms. The offer would come to him through the board of directors, and not from her. And Barrington is big enough for the place, give him time to look around and size it up for himself. He could keep one eye on this tidy little packet company and leave the rest to Mr. Bayne and yours truly."

Stella thanked him for the advice, promised to act on it at once, and made no mention of his reference to Barrington. Ashley wisely concluded to let well enough alone and trust Stella to paddle her own canoe. She was sending furniture from New York, and, as a labor of love, Susan and Harriet were putting the dignified old Levering house in order for the coming of its new mistress. It dawned upon Susan that Stella's taste in furnishings betokened the fine simplicity which goes with costliness, and she confided to Edward:

"Real antique sideboard and highboys and sofas, and perfect specimens of their kind, are only for those with ample funds, and these came straight

from the dealers. I am so afraid she is spending beyond her means, just to have the house look as it did when I was a girl."

"What difference would it make to you if she had all kinds of money?" was his pointed query.

"It is nothing to me, Edward, but if it should raise a barrier between you and Stella——"

"Which barrier we don't have to worry about until we come to it," said he, with assumed indifference.

It was in May that Stella Corbin returned to Eppingham, near the anniversary of her first arrival. She journeyed not as a stranger but in the lighthearted mood of one who was homeward bound. Ashley met her, a brother no longer flabby but most incongruously alert.

"Eppingham was the safe anchorage for me," he exclaimed, noting her gratified amazement, "and the same to you!"

At the Levering house Susan waited to welcome her and surrender the keys with a touch of gracious formality, but Stella was not permitted to tarry long, for the impatient Ashley and his automobile carried her off to inspect the wharves. Mr. Bayne had been summoned to Pinehaven to discuss a proposition for extending the shipping and warehouse service to that port. Barrington was busy discharging a cargo of grain, explained Ashley. It was a new stunt, and ought to be ripping. They loaded the grain at the Boston elevator terminals and brought it to the dairy farmers who had previously paid exorbitant railroad charges and were able to buy only in small quantities. Now a dairyman could order his year's supply when prices were low, and the company would allow him to take it out of the warehouse as he needed it. Instead of paying in cash, he might barter potatoes, apples, cordwood, and so on, establishing a credit by means of what his farm produced. This kept the schooners busy both ways and was bound to boom dairy farming.

"And can this really and truly be you?" laughed his sister.

"It is mostly Barrington," was the manly statement. "Now, here is something worth laughing at: I think of starting a small registered Jersey herd of my own. I have talked cows and lived with them during this grain campaign until they put the spell on me."

"May I be a partner? And you are the hero who ran from a spotted cow?"

"That's not fair, Stella. No postmortem, if you please. I am saving enough money to buy my own farm, thank you. What I am going to ask you to help me with is a little company of our own on the side, a logging railroad to tap the timberlands in back of where Hamlin Eaton was cutting last winter. With transportation to the river, we can get twenty million feet of lumber that has no outlet at present. The sawmills will go in there the minute we can guarantee cheap haulage. When that tract is cleaned up we can pull up our rails and operate somewhere else. It is Barrington's idea, but he insists that I swing it for myself. He is awfully square."

"If he approves of this portable railroad, I shall want to see your plans as soon as I can," replied Stella. "Is he happy in his work, Ashley? Does he feel that he ought to be at the head of affairs, instead of Mr. Bayne?"

"Bless you, he is the boss, but he doesn't know it. He gives Bayne credit for the whole blooming show, and there is only one thing in the world that could make him happier. But that is distinctly up to you."

"To undertake larger enterprises?" she murmured, quite disconcerted.

"Tut, tut, Stella, how can you? I am the family fool, but nothing as flimsy as that can get by me. You know what I mean."

"Please tell me more about the Bar-

rington Packet Company," she hastily implored him.

They were descending the hill to the wharves, and Stella paid him no more heed. Spread before her was a scene transformed and a dream come true. Instead of dilapidation and decay, there was the activity of a seaport renewing its youth, coming into its own again. In the aspect of the solidly constructed buildings, the bulkheaded water front, the schooners, trim and shapely, moored in their berths, there was the spirit of romance to make commerce more than a matter of dollars and cents. It was creative, the realization of an idea.

Barrington was on the wharf, now rebuilt, from which he had sailed on his first voyage as a boy in the old *Henrietta*. His buoyant health and vigor regained, he was, to Stella's eyes, the man who dominated the decks of the sinking *Columbian*. His smile had the old candid admiration as he hastened to meet her. Ashley discovered business elsewhere and departed in his automobile. For the fool of the family he displayed flashes of wisdom now and then.

Whatever Barrington felt in his heart, it was for him to show no more than that Miss Corbin was part owner of the company which employed him. Stella could afford to be less reserved, and, as they shook hands, she said:

"I made no mistake when I gave you my word—do you remember?—that morning on the beach, after the shipwreck. It seems years and years ago."

"It was all I saved from the wreck, Miss Corbin, your word that you would always believe in me. And I have never let go of it."

They walked to the end of the wharf, where the tide swirled seaward and the fourth schooner of the fleet lifted lofty spars. Her name had been freshly painted, and Stella exclaimed:

"The *Guiding Star!* Why, my name means——"

"That is why I asked Mr. Bayne to call her *Guiding Star,*" replied Barrington, with deeper feeling than he was willing to disclose.

The tribute moved her profoundly. If this was what she, in truth, meant to him, then the future held no problems which they should not be able mutually to adjust. The summer lay before them, and there were no shadows to darken it. Stella was aware that the real sense of obligation was hers, the gratitude for benefits received, for Barrington had guided her while absent and taught her to comprehend new and larger ideals of fidelity and service. His plans and his ambitions were so vitally interlocked with her own that she anxiously inquired of him:

"Now that you have found yourself, does this little home town appeal to you as it did when you were coming back to it as a refuge? I have been hearing such wonderful reports of you from Mr. Bayne and Ashley——"

With an impulsive gesture and a smile humorously apologetic, he interrupted her to protest:

"But you have heard only one side of the story. No doubt Mr. Bayne has honestly tried to tell you the facts, for a more conscientious man never sailed salt water. He is so straight that he leans backward, always ready to put in a good word for the other fellow and nothing to say for himself. His own experience with Captain McCready Pope affected his point of view. Another man selfishly stood in his way, do you see, and the object lesson cut deep. He is mortally afraid of being misunderstood, and therefore he gives me a lot of credit that really belongs to him."

"But I should not expect Ashley to be prejudiced in your favor," replied Stella, enjoying the argument.

"That brother of yours is a better shipmate than I ever imagined he could be, Miss Corbin. Too much money had warped him in every way. And he has

discovered, as I did, that hatred is poor ballast. It has been fine for him to work under a man like Mr. Bayne."

"Oh, bother Mr. Bayne," she very rudely declared, at which Barrington appeared so hurt that she penitently added: "He has written me every week, and I have had no word from you in months. I shall ask your advice about a good many matters, but first I want to know if you expect to stay in Eppingham. Are you satisfied?"

"Why not?" said he. "This is a man's work. We are setting an example for other investors, and we are helping every farmer, lumberman, merchant, and manufacturer within thirty miles of this river to help himself. New England money has been poured into the West by millions, leaving its own commerce and agriculture to starve for lack of it. The banks will lend money to anybody, barring the farmer, and the railroads have been too greedy and stupid to think of coöperation. Give us two or three years to prove what we can do with our ships and our warehouses and our rural banking system, for that is what we are really driving at, and you will be ready to stand behind us with more capital. We can operate farther inland with better roads, and they are coming—a fleet of tractors towing strings of wagons, like a tug and its barges, and we can force the railroad to extend branch lines to serve us in order to get the benefit of the short haul. What this region needs is cash and credit, low freight rates, and a square deal, and you will hear no more talk about abandoned farms and dying New England."

Stella clapped her hands and urged the ardent orator to continue. He made the Tropical Navigation Company seem the less important of her investments. Barrington looked a trifle abashed, and hastened to explain:

"It is more to the point to show you what we have accomplished. I should like to take you to the office presently. Ashley will be proud to have you meet some of his rural friends, what he calls his agency force."

"Ashley makes it all seem like a fairy story," she mirthfully retorted. "I don't have to worry on his account. Now about Mr. Bayne. Would he be happier in New York, do you think? He is not reconciled to being your superior officer."

"He hopes to marry Harriet Page, but, for some reason or other, he is unsettled and doubtful about his future. It is lack of confidence in himself, I take it, although I can't understand why. This is his enterprise, he set it going, and all I did was to straighten out a few kinks for him because I belonged in the town."

Stella refrained from scolding her quixotic shipmate, and asked him:

"Would Mr. Bayne make a capable marine superintendent of the Tropical Navigation Company?"

"You couldn't find a better," was the enthusiastic indorsement. "He would consider it a vindication, as you might say, and every officer in the fleet swears by him. As for Harriet, she loves to be on the go, to see the sights, and all that. The big city would enchant her. But how can we let Mr. Bayne go?"

"He might be willing to sell me his interest in this company," demurely suggested Stella. "I should like to own it outright. Of course, you don't feel competent to take his place at the head of the Barrington Packet Company, but I should be prepared to assume the risk."

"I am subject to my owner's orders," he loyally replied, with an earnestness which implied much more than he said.

"And will you help me, some day, to do what is wisest and best with the steamship company in New York?" she besought him, almost humbly. "I can't ask or command you to give up your work here, but if you were willing to

serve on the board of directors, in my interest, I should feel ever so much more confidence. This would mean the elimination of the Hersey influence and a reorganization later. Ashley has not the force and experience."

"But—but neither have I," faltered the bewildered Barrington.

"That is also my risk," smiled Stella.

"I will put my heart and soul into anything in the world you may ask me to do," was his simple confession of faith.

They turned and walked slowly into the main street of the village, and Stella saw, with comprehending vision, that in choosing this battle ground the sailor returned from the sea had come into his kingdom, and she desired no greater gift than the privilege of sharing it with him. In faith she had waited for him as in faith she had begun the dear task of preparing the way.

"I love this old town of mine," said he.

"It was love that led you back to it." And in these words Stella told the whole story of Edward Barrington, the castaway. A pause, and she exclaimed, her gaze meeting his:

"Not your old town, but *ours,* for I, too, have come home to Eppingham."

THE END.

HE CUT THE WIRE

THERE was once a great railroad that was managed by Wall Street over a private wire. This wire ran from No. 165 Broadway to a point thousands of miles away, west of the Mississippi River. And it was kept buzzing. Spies made secret reports. Subordinate employees sent in complaints of their superiors. Contracts were countermanded. Nobody out West had any authority. If a good traffic connection loomed in sight, other roads grabbed the business, while the Western officials of this road waited for instructions over the private wire. There wasn't an official who wouldn't rather have had a job for less money on almost any other road. The men complained that Gould would not trust them. Missouri Pacific was at the lowest ebb in its history and the most unpopular railroad in the West.

Then Benjamin F. Bush was made president of the Missouri Pacific, and he said at once: "I'm going to run this railroad without interference." His first act was to cut the private wire, thereby incidentally saving the company a bill of twenty-five thousand dollars a year. He then stumped the Western States, lecturing like a campaign orator to popularize the road in the public mind. And he saw to it that all the surplus earnings went into improvements.

The historic old railroad, founded by Jay Gould, has passed through many vicissitudes during the last few years, but Bush carried it through them all, and to-day he occupies a place even higher than that of president—he has succeeded George J. Gould as chairman of the board, a post in which the head of a railroad need no longer fear dictation by directors who don't know half as much about railroading as he does.

Reciprocity

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

UP in the high Sierras where they overlook the Kern,
There's a trail on the edge of nothing, and a mile by the plumb, below,
Is a tomb for the upland rider that is fool enough to turn
His hoss till he reaches the meadows where the mountain daisies grow.

The sun was paintin' the eastern peaks with a kind of a runnin' fire,
But the mornin' was chill and the air was thin and keen as an eagle claw;
I was ridin' slouched and easy, and singin' of Heart's Desire,
When my pony stopped, though the rein was slack, and my singin' stopped; I saw

Black on the cliff a somethin' taller nor any man,
Blur—'twas a big she-grizzly blockin' the trail ahead;
She turned, and the cubs behind her jumped at her growl and ran,
As my hand slipped down to my six-gun, but I changed my mind; instead

I slid from my hoss, stepped forward, and raisin' my hat polite,
—Though I raised my hat left-handed, my right bein' filled and pat—
I said to that old bear lady: "Now, it ain't my wish to fight,
Or I'd set to fannin' my six-gun, 'stead of tippin' to you my hat."

Say, pardner, would you believe it! She dropped to the ledge and swung—
Turned where a hoss couldn't make it—took after them cubs of hern,
And I stood lookin' mighty foolish where a bunch of them blue flowers hung
Just over the edge of nothin' smilin' down on the River Kern.

My cayuse was a-shakin' and sweatin'—'twas chilly—but so was I,
Howcome, I swung to the saddle and got him a-movin' slow,
But I quit my glass-eyed gazin' at the colors acrost the sky,
And took to surveyin' the landscape just ahead, where we had to go.

Glory! We hit the meadow, and I took in a breath or two,
And I heard my hoss do likewise; 'twas a kind of a silent prayer,
Just a second of real thanksgivin' for that Something beyond the blue
That looks after men and hosses and put all the stars up there.

Mebby a half hour later we was pushin' across the line
Where the rock cuts into the timber, when I spied a few rods away
The back of that old she-grizzly; I drew down slow and fine,
Then, thinks I, you are mindin' your business, so I'll tend to my own, to-day.

A-guardin' her headstrong young ones; doin' the best she can;
Willin' to do the wise thing; game—but not lookin' for fight;
Pretty good rule for a human. . . . Oh, I guess I'm an easy man,
But the grizzly and me broke even, 'cause we both of us was polite.

The Black Pearl

By Albert Edward Ullman

The enterprising lawyer at the call of beauty in distress flings himself heart and soul into a mystery that looked a good deal like persecution

THE day was Monday; the month December, rushing to its close; and the small clock on the littered desk stood at precisely four o'clock. The room was small and dim, the second floor of an old building on Center Street. Of its two windows, the one at the side had been blinded by the uprising of the ugly brick wall of a new building, which deprived it of air and light. The sun never entered this room, for the other window faced north in the shadow of the Criminal Courts' Building.

In this room Max Sterner, counselor-at-law, made his office, and if it was dark, the ways of its occupant were even darker. He had neither clerk nor stenographer, for he kept no books and never wrote a letter; and though the mean little office, with its battered desk and chairs, bespoke poverty, it was well known that the lawyer enjoyed an unusually large criminal practice.

Many a learned judge had vaguely wondered how this strange, eager little person, knowing neither law nor logic, had ever been admitted to the bar. This wonder had increased on occasion when, after his honor had charged a jury in a way which left little doubt of the defendant's guilt, said jury had filed in with a verdict of acquittal, to the intense satisfaction of Max Sterner.

It was said by the envious that he had never defended an innocent man. If anything, this added to his reputation, for, in the vernacular of the underworld, "Maxie turned 'em out." If ways and success passed the understanding of many, the gentry who preyed knew well the mysterious combination of police and politics which gave the lawyer his peculiar power. Hence, they were wont to employ his services when they made their appearances now and then at the prisoners' rail.

Petty larceny or homicide case, they were all as one to this mole of a man; his fees were invariably all the offender possessed. Liberty was just as dear as Max Sterner could make it.

He sat at his desk now, a bald, oily, fat little man, with dark, darting eyes, almost bulging out of their sockets. He was smooth shaven, thin-lipped; and his chin receded in such fashion that when he smiled the lower part of his face took on the look of a shark. He was smiling now and rubbing his plump hands with satisfaction at the day's pickings when the door opened, admitting a modishly dressed woman, heavily veiled.

"Mr. Sterner?" inquired a modulated, but troubled, voice.

"That's me," said the lawyer, showing his sharp yellow teeth. "Sit down, lady."

His visitor took a seat timidly, and then, after a moment's hesitancy, raised her veil, revealing a face of youthful beauty. It would have been proud at another time, but now the troubled blue

eyes and the lids red from weeping gave it an appearance of wistfulness.

"I have been directed to you, Mr. Sterner——" she said, her voice choking and interrupting her speech.

"Now, now, my dear," he cooed, in a tone meant to be paternal and sympathetic, "Max Sterner will get you out. What's the trouble?"

Seemingly reassured by his tone, the beautiful caller regained control of her feelings. "A wayward brother," she breathed sadly.

"A brother?" ejaculated the little lawyer, plainly disappointed. Already he had mentally pictured the sensational trial of the handsome young woman and her acquittal through his skill. "A brother! What's he gone and done?"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing! Simply an unfortunate circumstance."

"Ah-h!" he wheezed doubtfully.

"He's as innocent as I am," she fired up, understanding the note of skepticism in his voice. "He has been wayward, but honest. But, oh, Mr. Sterner" —her voice broke and lowered—"it isn't this charge so much, but the publicity and what it will do at home."

"At home?" the little shyster repeated.

"Yes," she sobbed. "Mother will surely disown him; she has been on the point of doing it for the past year. That's—that's why I came to get him back."

"Now tell me all about it," he said softly. "What's the charge?"

"Larceny, I think," she trembled. "I know nothing more than the police have told me; they would not let me see brother. After packing his things this morning he left the hotel to look at some pearls for mother."

"He had money then?" Her questioner's eyes narrowed.

"Well, no; really, he did not have any money—that is, enough to make such a purchase—but mother had given me a check to do a little shopping and pay any debts of Arthur's."

As she spoke she opened her reticule and drew out a check, as if in proof of her statements. A one and three ciphers, following a dollar mark, could be plainly deciphered by the lawyer. He drew a long breath.

"Go on—go on!" he said eagerly.

"You know he's been a little wild since he left college. Running over here weeks at a time—terribly extravagant—some stage person. This time he remained, and mother cut off his allowance last week." The frank blue eyes dimmed for a moment. "I arrived Saturday, and, after a talk, the dear boy decided to return. Well, we both knew that mother is ever so fond of black pearls and decided to buy her one for Christmas. Brother was to find one in the shops and let me know; I was going to pay for it out of my check."

"And then?"

"That's all," she said simply. "Except that I received word in a roundabout way—he refused to give his name to the police, you know—of this dreadful affair. He had been arrested in Jordan's—a pearl was missing—but none was found on him."

"And what do you want me to do?" the crafty Max asked.

"Why, get him out at once!" his beautiful visitor replied, in surprise. "He's perfectly innocent! And one thing you must do—keep his name a secret and out of the papers. It would be a terrible blow to mother; she would never forgive him, even though he were innocent."

Already Max Sterner could see rich pickings for months to come from this affair. "Aristocratic and wealthy Back Bay family—blue bloods—terribly afraid of scandal!"

"Yes—yes; I understand, dear lady," he remarked unctuously. "The charge will be simple if nothing was found on

him, but saving the family name and keeping it out of the papers costs a lot of money. Those fellows are awful leeches," he ended vaguely and confidentially. "Honestly, it makes me so mad the advantage they take of nice people in trouble."

"Just what will it cost?" she asked.

"Well," he said calculatingly, "what do you say if I try to do it for a thousand dollars?"

For reply she handed him the check. "It's all I have at this time. I shall remember you handsomely after I return to Boston, Mr. Sterner, if you keep his name out of the newspapers, for, I presume, they'll all have something about it."

The lawyer glanced quickly at the narrow slip of paper. Yes, it was for exactly one thousand dollars, drawn on the Commonwealth Bank, and signed by Mrs. Osborne Jenkins. He would have to wait until morning to make sure that it was good, though he had little doubt of it.

"Have no fear, lady. You come to the right man when you come to me. I'll have him out in no time"—then remembering the check—"that is, tomorrow, but I'll fix it up with the warden so he has a nice room to-night."

II.

The assumption of Max Sterner's visitor that the newspapers would have something about it was quite correct. In fact, they had quite a lot about it as evidenced by copies of the various morning newspapers scattered on the artful lawyer's desk. They held forth at great length about the mystery of the black pearl—as they called it—and the happenings in Jordan's the day previous.

It was during the noon hour, when the great jewelry shop on the avenue was all but deserted, that an alert young man had alighted from a taxi and asked to be directed to the pearl counter. He was dressed in that careless London fashion and carried an umbrella, but was too brisk to be taken for an Englishman. A stranger to the floor manager, the latter was nevertheless impressed by his youthful face and aristocratic bearing. He had followed the swinging, athletic figure with an envious eye, after looking down at his own rounded waist.

The assistant in charge during the lunch hour received the young man with that mixture of distant politeness and humility which is the first requisite for service in the exclusive shop. Also, he scrutinized the young man's face and dress closely. A dissipated look, a nervous manner, a predilection for the extreme in dress, often meant a favor for some stage favorite—naturally, expense no object! However, the visitor was carelessly attired, cool-eyed, and assured.

"A black pearl—something modest," he truculently commanded.

"Yes, sir; at once," the assistant answered. Thereupon, going to a cabinet, he removed a small tray lined with white velvet in which perhaps two score rings, mounted with lustrous black pearls of varying sizes, rested in as many little slots or openings, and returned to the counter.

"Might I suggest?" he said, daintily lifting one from the tray and passing it for the visitor's inspection.

"A glass," the latter ordered briefly.

"Yes, sir," the salesman replied, with new respect, handing over the magnifying instrument.

The young man looked at the pearl long and closely. "Not quite perfect," he commented crisply. "Something better—mater's a good judge."

"Ah-h, for his mother, then!" thought the assistant. "Will you look at this?" he inquired, proffering another ring.

In this way a full half hour was

passed. The prospective customer seemed indeed hard to please. Eventually he set aside two rings, the prices mounting into four figures, and then remained uncertain as to his choice. Finally he asked: "Will you hold these separate until afternoon? I'd like my sister to see them."

"Certainly, sir, certainly!" replied the relieved salesman, reaching for some cotton batting and an envelope. "What hour did you say?"

"I didn't say," answered the other coolly. "Likely about four." Turning shortly, he strode through the aisle, stopped momentarily to admire a display of carved ivories, and then walked rapidly toward the front.

He had traveled perhaps half the distance to the entrance when there was a sharp gasp, followed by a muffled cry, from the direction of the pearl counter. The store detective, among others, near the door, turned to see the assistant dumbly waving his hands in frantic pantomime and pointing to the departing stranger.

The detective acted at once. "I beg your pardon," he accosted the young man.

"No need to—don't know you," was the curt reply as the speaker sought to pass him.

"But I must ask you to wait," the other insisted apologetically, edging closer. "Something's happened at the pearl counter!"

"No doubt," said the stranger, in an annoyed manner, eying the assistant in that department, who seemed on the verge of apoplexy. "Salesman has a fit."

By this time that highly excited individual had reached the small group near the door. "A black pearl missing!" he gasped, staring at the young man with dilated eyes.

"You'll have to go back," the detective remarked more firmly. "It may be on the floor, sir—but we'll have to investigate."

"Dashed provoking—very!" snapped the detained one. "Well, make haste and be done with it!" Squaring his shoulders, and preceded by the salesman and followed by the others, he walked deliberately to the rear.

There rested the white tray on the glass top of the show case with three vacant slots. Two rings were in an envelope near by, and it needed but a glance to show that one was missing from the tray, for it was the invariable custom of the establishment to keep the trays full to check just such an occurrence.

The stranger stood calmly by while the others made a systematic search of every possible place where a ring could conceal itself. He was self-possessed and shrugged his shoulders in resignation when the store detective, now gruff with suspicion, said: "We'll have to search you, young man."

At the end of another half hour the suspect stepped forth from an anteroom, fully dressed and perserving his usual calm. The search had been most painstaking, but the black pearl was still missing, and the detective eyed him in a baffled manner. The store people were now holding a whispered conference in a group near by. That the stranger had done something with the ring they were convinced—he had refused to give his name or business—but what? It was neither in the shop nor on his person, and no other shopper had even approached that remote counter. It was more than puzzling—almost supernatural!

From the moment when Detective Sergeant Hogan arrived from headquarters the detained man had closed his mouth firmly and refused to speak. Though doubtful, the police official, as much from anger as chagrin, had bundled him off in a cab to Mulberry Street. There the famous "third de-

gree" *sans* force had failed utterly. His name, origin, and affairs remained unknown, and Hogan was at a standstill. The prisoner's clothes, though custom-made and of expensive material, were entirely free from labels, and his linen bore no laundry mark by which his identity could be traced. The disappearance of the black pearl was a mystery indeed.

III.

Of these and many more things Max Sterner was fully cognizant. He had visited the wayward young man in the office of the Tombs the evening before, and from his lips confirmed every statement made by the beautiful and devoted sister. Later, more through a habit of caution, he had visited the Biltmore, where he found his visitor of the afternoon, sad-eyed and alone, in a modest suite, with a picture of the brother on a table before her. Even the sly little lawyer had been almost touched by the sight.

If anything had been needed to confirm the conviction he already entertained it was the receipt in the morning of telegraphic advice from Boston, through his bankers, that Mrs. Osborne Jenkins' check was good for six figures. A brief glance at a social register gave the information that she had a son and daughter living. Max was in a transport of delight.

The forenoon had been a busy one for him, and he had had the case postponed until the afternoon session so that he might pull certain necessary wires.

He was chuckling now as he talked over the telephone.

"Listen, Hogan!" he was saying. "You haven't got a chance. Maxie never double-crossed you yet, and when I tell you that this here young fellow is a real blue blood with lots of money and I got a telegraph from his old lady this morning, you can bet your life. Sure—sur-r-r-e!" Then he whispered a name. "But it can't come out, sergeant—it would spoil the whole thing. You know me—I'm no hog—it's fifty-fifty. The case is easy," he ended. "I'm getting paid to keep the name out.

"Now you just hang around here, my dear," he said, turning from the telephone to the beautiful young sister seated near by, "while I go uptown and hand them Jordan people something nice like a brick."

His eyes were protruding dangerously now as he grabbed a silk hat of an early vintage, which he fondly imagined gave him a distinguished appearance, and rushed down the creaking flight of stairs.

After an argument with a taxi driver, he made his way uptown in the smoking, clattering vehicle to the marble palace of Jordan. "Wait here," he said, "and make that clock stop its ticks—I made you a flat rate."

Haughtily he entered the great shop, and, with a gesture, handed the functionary at the door his card. "The head of the firm, he said, "Mr. Max Sterner—counselor-at-law." The last he uttered loudly, looking about to note the effect on the staring shoppers and employees.

As the minutes passed he began to grow impatient. Then a suave young man approached, the lawyer's card in hand, and whispered aside to Sterner.

"My business?" bellowed Max. "Tell him a suit for a hundred thousand—mebbe a million dollars—that's my business! And if he don't see me quick I'll show this place up. I should worry about him."

"Yes—yes; right this way—right this way!" gasped the secretary, mindful of many lifted eyebrows and fearful of further speech from the excited visitor. "Entirely my mistake, I assure you. Mr. Jordan will be delighted to see you."

Twenty minutes later the lawyer emerged through a door marked "Private," flushed of face, the whites of his protruding eyes giving him a most threatening appearance, and puffed his way out. Inside the luxurious private office, the head of the firm sat, pale and shaken. Never had he undergone such a humiliating experience as he had suffered at the hands of this devilish Sterner person. His usual reserve and dignity had been of no avail. From the moment of the lawyer's entrance he had sat as if stunned, listening to a flood of invective. Not a word could he utter, for the caller, whose reputation he vaguely recalled with a shudder, shouted horrible threats at the top of his voice.

"I'll show you!" roared Max. "Arresting a decent young fellow—his mother could buy and sell you five times over—because he is too proud to give his name for you to disgrace. Well—you watch me. I'll disgrace you, so none of them society swells will come near you, and make you pay heavy damages for false arrest and imprisonment. A nice place you run with your stealing clerks"—the horrible thought struck the head of the firm with a jolt—"putting the blame on innocent people."

As the little lawyer continued his tirade of threats his listener's blood almost ran cold as he visualized sensational civil suits and still more sensational publicity. What a terrible quandary to be in? What should he do? Then he recalled the remark about the clerk. Had the assistant been searched? Probably not. A horrible dilemma, surely.

He was still weakly debating this matter with himself long after the fire-eating Max's departure. Then he decided to telephone Detective Sergeant Hogan, who had made the arrest. Stepping into a booth, where none could overhear, he held a long conversation over the wire with that official. What he learned caused him even more uneasiness, and, summoning the store detective, he angrily gave that veteran a few brief commands.

This, perhaps, partly accounted for the fact that there was but a perfunctory hearing in the magistrate's court at the afternoon session. If any other explanation was needed the little lawyer's activities in and out of the courtroom might have furnished it. He was everywhere, whispering to the court clerk and holding confabs in the outer corridors with various mysterious persons, among them a politician from the magistrate's home district. When his honor took his seat on the bench and court was convened Max Sterner wore a satisfied and confident look.

Briefly, the pale assistant from the Fifth Avenue shop told his story. He was almost certain, though he wouldn't swear to it, that the tray of pearl rings had every aperture filled. He was awkward and confused in his manner and acted almost as if he were the prisoner at the bar. To his story the store detective added but little, and that little in a subdued voice, doubtless due to the elder Jordan's acrid comments at an earlier hour.

In turn, they were followed on the stand by Sergeant Hogan. Under the approving eye of Max Sterner, he told of his being called into the case, of the prisoner's arrest, and of his failure to elicit any information as to the former's antecedents. It was noticeable that his testimony lacked force, and that he manifested little or no interest in the matter. Evidently he considered it a hopeless task, that of connecting the prisoner with the theft.

Now, if there was one principle Max Sterner had, it was that of leaving nothing to chance or imagination. Hence when it became his privilege to cross-examine the police official he cast upon that worthy a solemn and fleeting wink.

Then contorting his features into a menacing look, he sneered in true police-court fashion:

"You are a detective?"

Hogan flushed. He was irritated by the doubt expressed in his questioner's tones. "A sergeant of detectives," he answered shortly.

"Ah-h!" Max smiled malevolently. "Did you detect anything on my client's person?"

"Not a blessed thing."

"How did you come to make the arrest?"

"Sure the store people missed a valuable pearl, and this fella was the only bird who had a chance to take it!"

"The only bird?" the lawyer repeated cuttingly. "This young gentleman was the only one near the pearls—*the only one?* How about the clerk?" he added significantly. "Did you search him?"

"Why, no!" faltered Hogan.

"That's all!" rasped the defendant's counsel, as he eyed the magistrate. He had already seen to it that a whisper of the young man's connections had reached the latter's ear.

The magistrate looked away. "Did Jordan's wish to have the case put over for a day or two?"

"Jordan's did not!"

"Charge dismissed!" he rapped out.

Max smilingly led his client to the outer rotunda and through a side entrance to a waiting cab, the curtains of which were closely drawn. After glancing about quickly, he followed his companion in.

"You perfect dear, you!" exclaimed a voice, half laughing, half crying, and then he felt a warm kiss pressed upon his flushed cheek.

IV.

Thursday had been a holiday, affording Max Sterner a day of rest after his activities in the pearl case; and he returned to the dingy little office ready for further fray. It was a dull day, and he had plenty of time for reflection. All of his clients were at liberty, and evidently intended to remain so for some days at least.

Overnight he had given considerable thought to the affair in which he had so easily earned a thousand-dollar fee. He had not as yet deposited the check for collection. He figured that the possession of this slip of paper, bearing the Boston dowager's printed name and signature, and the peculiar circumstances attending his receipt of it, gave it a far greater value than the four figures on its face. However, the matter had to be handled delicately—trust Max for that.

In all probability he would have to run over to Boston, he thought, and have a talk with the young man and his beautiful sister; he would not see the mother unless it was absolutely necessary. He would say that Jordan's were not quite satisfied with the way things had turned out and threatened to carry on an investigation. His only alternative was to sue them for heavy damages—he would insist on that—regardless of publicity or scandal.

This last, of course, would bring them to terms; they would do anything to avoid reopening the case. He rubbed his pudgy hands at the thought. What a fat fee this time! The first check would look like a plugged nickel. He anticipated little or no trouble, for he had but a poor opinion of the brother, and was sure he could depend upon the gratefulness of the sister. Moreover, if they didn't come to terms there was his last recourse—the mother. What must be, must be.

It was while he was indulging in these pleasant reflections that the door was flung open with a crash, admitting no less a person than the redoubtable Detective Sergeant Hogan. His ferret eyes were blazing and his close-cropped mustache bristling, as he approached the surprised lawyer.

"You are a fine skate, Sterner! I thought you never double-crossed any one? A fine mess I'm in, trusting you —on the carpet in front of the 'commish' in the morning!"

"What do you mean, Hogan? What is it?" There was no mistaking his sincerity, and the officer was slightly mollified.

"What do I mean?" he repeated. "Here, read this!" and he passed over a newspaper clipping. It read:

POLICE CAPTURE MASTER CROOKS.

BUFFALO, *December 24th.*—Although wanted by the authorities of every large city, it remained for the local police to capture, this afternoon, two of the most daring sneak thieves known to the annals of crime. Nellie Barnes, alias "Chicago Nell," was caught red-handed in the theft of a five-thousand-dollar solitaire diamond ring from the store of Crawford & Sons. Later, her accomplice, James Crawley, otherwise the "College Kid," was apprehended at a fashionable hotel.

The arrests came about in an odd manner. On Wednesday morning a dapper young man, later identified as Crawley, visited the jewelry shop in the rôle of a prospective purchaser. After looking at a number of valuable stones, he appeared unable to make a decision, and requested that several be held for a sister's inspection in the afternoon. Before he had succeeded in leaving the shop, a ring, valued at five thousand dollars, was missing. The man was detained, but a search of his person and the shop failed to reveal its whereabouts. The indignant visitor was finally permitted to depart.

By a mere accident one of the firm encountered this same young man in the grillroom of the exclusive Algonquin during the lunch hour. The latter was accompanied by a beautiful young woman of unmistakable breeding, and the member of the firm rather congratulated himself that no arrest had been made on suspicion. An hour later he was surprised to see the same young woman enter the Crawford store. His suspicions were aroused at once, and he ordered a close watch kept upon her.

The beautiful visitor had requested to be directed to the floor manager—she had left an umbrella there that morning when shopping with some friends. Upon meeting him, she described the lost article minutely, even to the monogram on the gold handle. She was informed that such an article had been found standing against a show case in the front of the store, and that Crawford's would be pleased to return it.

The watchful member of the firm stood near by while the colloquy was going on, and as she accepted the umbrella with a smiling word of thanks, a solution of the mystery came to him like a flash. He at once ordered the woman detained and the umbrella taken from her. In its folds the missing diamond ring was discovered.

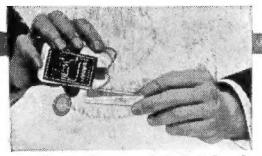
The arrest of Crawley a little later in the day fully revealed their plan—as bold as it was original. He had visited the shop in the morning, palmed a diamond ring under the very eyes of the clerk, and dropped it in a woman's umbrella he was carrying. Knowing that the loss of the ring would be discovered before he would succeed in leaving the place, he stopped at one of the show cases on his way out, leaving the umbrella behind. Later in the day Chicago Nell called to reclaim the lost article, as already described.

Crawley confessed to having worked the same game with the Barnes woman in a number of large cities, Jordan's, of New York City, being among their victims. Though arrested in the last place for the theft of a black pearl, he had succeeded in obtaining his liberty, while Chicago Nell was no less successful in obtaining the return of the umbrella left by him in front of a case of carved ivories in Jordan's, in which the missing pearl had been concealed.

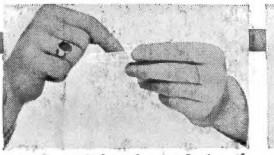
A long term of imprisonment faces the two master crooks, and the big jewelers of the country will breathe easier for a time. It is thought that they may have added forgery to their other crimes, as a check book was found among their possessions bearing the name of Mrs. Osborne Jenkins, of Boston.

As Max Sterner finished the reading of this item his face took on a hunted and haggard look. He stared at the police official in a dazed way; slowly he removed a check from his pocket, held it in his two hands for a moment, then tore it in two parts.

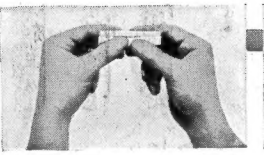
"I always keep my word, Hogan," he said sadly, handing one of the pieces to that person. "I said fifty-fifty—here's your half!"



1 In the fingers of the left hand, hold paper, curved, to receive the tobacco, poured with the right hand.



2 Spread the tobacco the length of the paper, making it slightly hollow in the centre.



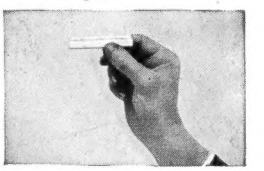
3 Then place your two thumbs next to each other in the middle of the paper in this position.

4 Roll Cigarette on lower fingers, index fingers moving up. With thumbs gently force edge of paper over the tobacco.

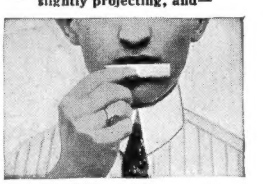
How To "Roll Your Own"

It's a simple, easy process. You can do it with your eyes shut after a little practice. And what a joy is the fresh, fragrant cigarette of "Bull" Durham rolled by your own hand to your own liking! *You* "roll your own" with "Bull" and note the difference.

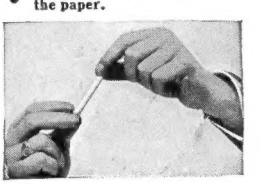
5 Shape the Cigarette by rolling it with the thumbs as you draw them apart.



6 Hold the Cigarette in your right hand, with edge of paper slightly projecting, and—



7 With the tip of your tongue moisten the projecting edge of the paper.



8 Close ends of Cigarette by twisting the paper. The Cigarette is now ready to smoke.

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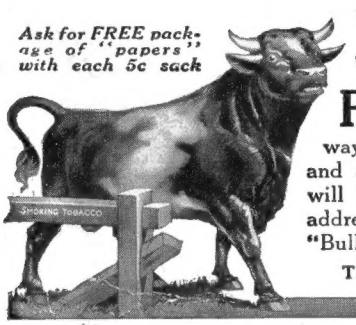
Ask for FREE package of "papers" with each 5c sack



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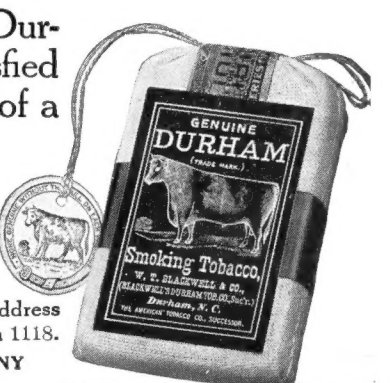
THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY



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